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Sway

GOING GLOBAL
+ ZAKI IBRAHIM
BREAKS OUT

THE POWER ISSUE

MEET **26** INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE USING THEIR CLOUT TO CREATE CHANGE

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WITH ROSEMARY SADLIER

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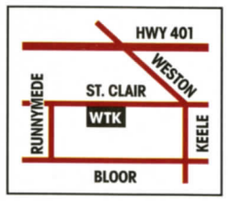

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LET OUR FAMILY TREAT YOUR FAMILY

Dr. Anthony Sterling

Here they grow again!

Sterling Dental is proud to announce the opening of its newest practice; a state of the art dental office like no other, at the brand new Brampton hospital location! It officially opens in Spring, 2008 and is considered a dental haven with exquisite modern-day décor. The technologically advanced facility is fully computerized and paperless, warranting faster and more efficient service in an environmentally friendly way.

Dr. Anthony Sterling has been practicing dentistry for sixteen years. Upon graduating from Ohio State University College of Dentistry, the young enthusiast opened his first practice in the professional building at the Humber River Regional Hospital in Toronto. Today, this Toronto location maintains a more traditional ambiance and remains one of the friendliest dental establishments in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In 2002, the second location of Sterling Dental was built, in Brampton, and today Dr. Sterling prepares to open his newest practice at the Brampton hospital location.

The Brampton hospital location is situated beside the William Osler Health Care Center, Brampton's 1.3 million square foot health care jewel, which opened in October 2007 to provide for the city's rapidly increasing population! Sterling Dental will have full access to some of the hospital's extensive range of resources, technologies and equipment including the advanced Cone Beam Tomography (CP Scan), which provides diagnostic imaging to reveal minute details in complex cases.

Dr. Sterling stays abreast of the latest break-throughs and cutting-edge procedures by continuously polishing his skills at various continuing education courses. He has treated countless numbers of patients with a wide range of cases and he has ample experience in providing implant surgery, orthodontics (braces), veneers and whitening, to name a few. The dentist can also make crowns and bridges in just one appointment and has skillfully mastered the "teeth in an hour" approach to dentistry, allowing you to spend less time away from your busy schedule! Dr. Sterling is confident that with the help of his professional and qualified staff, he can offer you the brilliant smile you deserve!

Sterling Dental extends special thanks to all those who were with them from the beginning and who continue to support them at all of their locations. Sterling Dental always welcomes new patients and their greatest compliments are your referrals of friends and loved ones.

Stay tuned for the Open House/Grand Opening of Sterling Dental's newest Brampton hospital location! Keep checking the website for more details!

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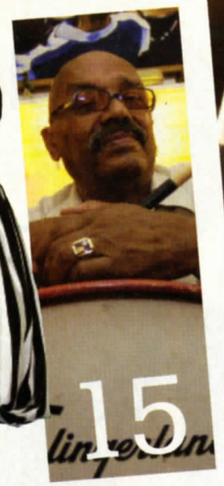

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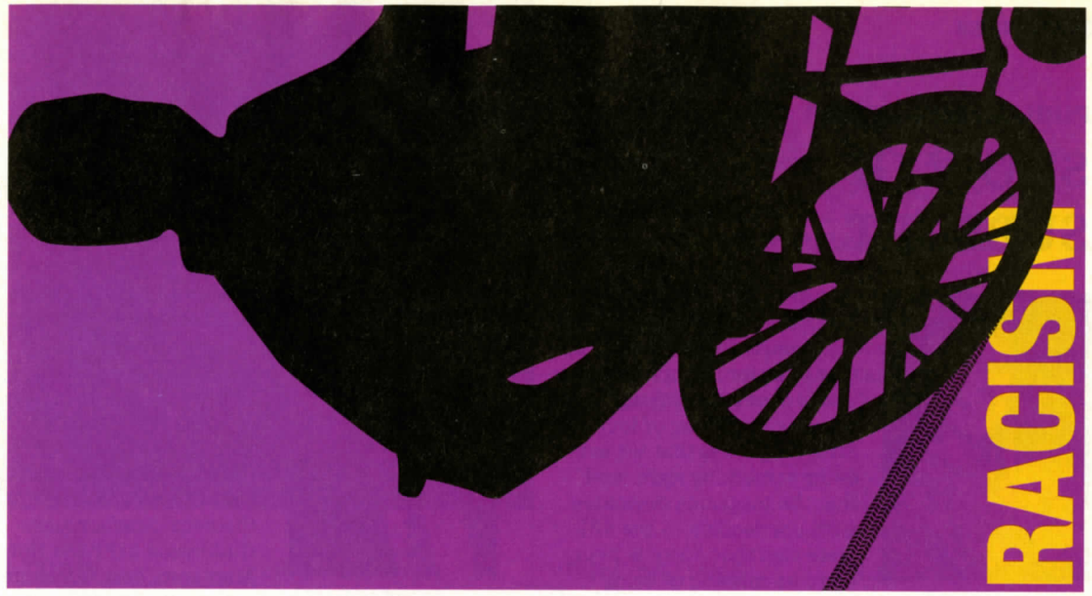

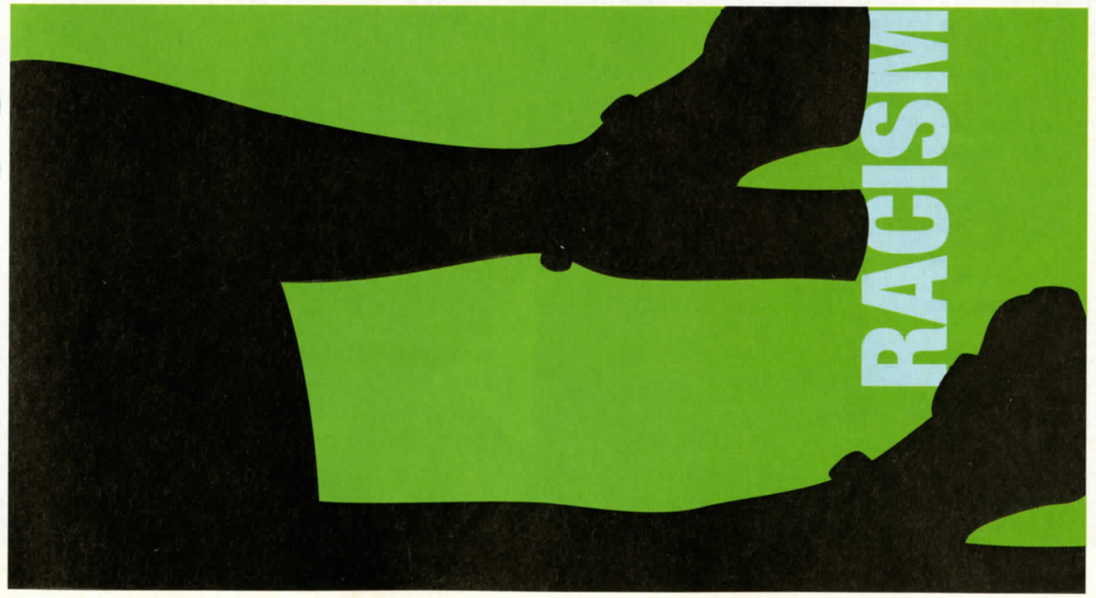

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

SHOW OF SUPPORT

ONE OF THE many duties of being the publisher of *Sway* is the chance to read the letters that pour into our office.

It's always gratifying to see the outpouring of love for *Sway*; it proves that we are doing something right, and that the magazine resonates with our readers — the ultimate sign that *Sway* is living up to its mission of being inspirational.

With many of the letters we've received, there appears to be a common theme/question: Will *Sway* ever be published more than just quarterly, and what can be done to ensure *Sway* lives on?

As you may know, the lifeblood of any magazine is through advertising and, in some cases, reader subscriptions. Since *Sway* is currently distributed free (except for a small base of home subscriptions, see page 80), we have to rely on advertising revenues to carry us through.

To that end, we need the support of businesses, both inside and outside the community. The more support we have, the more issues we'll be able to publish and the more often *Sway* will be enjoyed by our readers.

It's ironic that this issue marks our first anniversary of the re-launched *Sway*. We promised to make it better and more relevant, and, judging from your feedback, it appears that we have.

So many, many heartfelt thanks to the advertisers who've supported us this past year, and thank you in advance to the many new businesses who will support us in coming issues. With all your support we guarantee to continue to do what we do best — publish a first-rate magazine. And just like in our special Power Issue, continue to showcase the strength of our community to effect change and inspire others to succeed.

Cheryl

CHERYL PHILLIPS

P.S. Make sure to keep your feedback coming. It is input from you that has helped make *Sway* the respected magazine that it is today.

EDITOR'S LETTER

PEOPLE POWER

WITH THIS ISSUE, *Sway* steps into spring by bringing together a collection of the most influential and inspiring members of our community. Our cover — which features Toronto Argonauts CEO Michael "Pinball" Clemons, Scarborough–Guildwood MPP the Hon. Margarett Best, acclaimed author Austin Clarke and panoramic arts performer d'bi.young.anitafrika — leads into additional profiles of courage, humility and innovation. What comes out of these very personal portraits is the realization that at its best, the currency of power energizes positive social change, acts as a beacon for success and illuminates the pathways of support to the most vulnerable members of our community.

These values are reinforced in the stories that pepper this entire issue. Whether the focus is on the work of organizations like Black Pearls, a group that advocates for young black women by providing strong, positive and productive mentorship, or the work of educators and historians dedicated to providing a new perspective on black history and identity, *Sway* is intent on forcing the public at large to recognize the power of our community and its global contribution.

As members of a region recognized for diversity and multiculturalism, blacks in Canada must celebrate our ability to influence the ways in which people query, feel and experience the world.

Artists like reggae musician Humble, global guitar virtuoso Adam Solomon and talented singer Zaki Ibrahim, all of whom are featured in our music section, have made our city the world music capital of the globe. Meanwhile, award-winning Toronto writer Nalo Hopkinson takes readers to the stars and beyond with her brand of spiritually infused science fiction.

The unifying theme that runs throughout these stories is that any individual can empower him or herself to be an instrument of success, change, hope and influence. I hope that with each Power profile or story that you read in this season's issue, you will be driven to turn your aspirations into great achievements.

JON SARPONG

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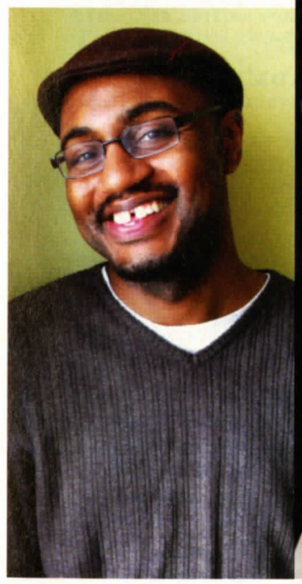
STEVE CARTY
Photographer Steve Carty's striking images have been seen in numerous magazines such as *Jane, In Touch Weekly, Girlfriend, Vogue Russia, YM, Maclean's, The Source, Fashion18, National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*. In addition to giving photography workshops to local youth, Carty has an upcoming exhibition at the Jerome Jenner Gallery in May. In this issue, Carty captured some of Canada's most prominent movers and shakers for our Power Issue cover and feature spread.

DEL COWIE
If you're big into the music scene in Toronto, then you will probably have noticed writer Del Cowie at a number of events. Currently an assistant editor at *Exclaim!*, his work has been featured in various publications, including *Vibe, XXL, URB* and *EYE WEEKLY*. In this issue, he caught up with singer Zaki Ibrahim, who has been creating a Canada-wide buzz and will be opening for Erykah Badu in May with her eclectic sound and South African roots.

LISA STERLING
Lisa Sterling knows fashion. As both a professional runway model and writer, she has worked with the best and brightest in Toronto's growing fashion industry. In Black is Back, she connects with the city's hottest new black designers and examines the systemic issues they face with distribution and recognition in Canada's fashion scene.

INGRIE WILLIAMS
Our talented fashion editor Ingrie Williams braved sleet and rain to bring you our spring fashion spread. A freelance fashion stylist and writer on fashion, beauty and health topics, her writing has appeared in *Toronto Life, Canadian Family, Elevate* and *Elle Canada.com*. Her work this issue includes Behind the Seams, a fashion feature showcasing local black designers, a Spring Fling beauty spread and, just for the guys, Dressed to Thrill.

ANDREA THOMPSON
Andrea Thompson seems to do it all as a writer, spoken word artist, media host and local arts administrator. In this issue, Thompson spoke with award-winning sci-fi author Nalo Hopkinson about the intricacies of speculative writing and why the genre has so few black authors.



LETTERS

In love with *Sway*

I STUMBLED OVER the December issue of your magazine and I must say it is fantastic! I have not finished reading it as of yet, but I could not wait to let you know how I feel about this magazine. As a couple of readers have said, it is so inspiring and uplifting. I love the fact that I can relate to the stories. Please keep up the good work. This is a great look for our community.

Kerrian

Which way do you *Sway*?

I'M ONE OF the contributors for the magazine (Ask Xania) and I'm proud to be part of publication that truly represents the diversity that Canada upholds.

Magazines like *Sway* are not only entertaining but reach out to real people with real issues that we all can relate to at some point in our lives. Encourage local/national businesses to pick up a copy and reach out to a larger demographic.

In order to sustain *Sway*'s life span, community support is important. Without the community, there are no people. Without the people, there is no *Sway*.

Which way do you *Sway*?

Support. We're all we have.

Xania

Where are you?

I MISSED THE winter copy of *Sway* but saw it displayed at an employment centre I attend. I'm just wondering, will the magazine always be published quarterly? Will there be more issues soon? The magazine is very interesting and informative.

Christine Martin

Long shelf life

THIS MAGAZINE IS exactly what Toronto needs. I LOVE IT. What can we do to make sure it has a long, long life?

Naki Osutei

I am not my hair

THANK YOU FOR such a fabulous magazine. I just picked up the winter 2007 issue and read the article "Hair Politics" by Nerissa J. Martin with great interest. It just so happens that a friend of mine is also considering going natural. There are more style options available now for our natural hair, but women may be afraid to try them because of the criticism they will face. I once went natural myself, and I still remember the stares. If our natural tresses were shown more often in the mainstream media and talked about in a positive way, I think that would help us to feel better about our hair. As for Ashley Baker, the former style editor at *Glamour* magazine, she should be ashamed of herself for making such despicable comments.

Charmaine Elizabeth Merchant

Pursuit of happiness

AFTER READING Nerissa J. Martin's exploration of the question "Why are we all so obsessed with the locks of others?", I immediately called my significant other to encourage her in her pursuit of happiness. I am joyous to know that *Sway* has decided to provide a sophisticated alternative to our collective black culture when it comes to media. More strength to the writing team for composing articles that cover taboo topics.

Troy Logan

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK. WRITE US AT:
LETTERS@SWAYMAG.CA

Sway

Volume 3, Issue 1

THE POWER AND THE PULSE OF A PEOPLE

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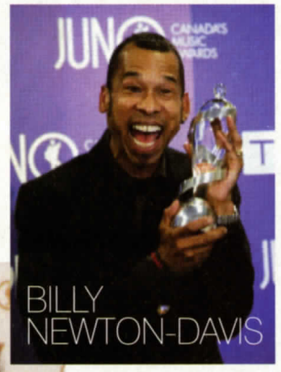
NEWS & NOTABLE

BRINGING HOME THE HARDWARE

The April broadcast of the 2008 Juno Awards on CTV was the second most-watched Juno Awards ceremony in history, with an estimated 1.45 million viewers. Hosted by Brampton comedian Russell Peters, the show broke the traditional Juno mold with cheeky humour, stellar performances and slick production. Another break from tradition was the higher profile that some of Canada's black musicians received at the celebration, especially in the winner's circle.



Award recipients included Measha Brueggergosman, *Surprise* (Classical Album of the Year: Vocal or Choral Performance); Billy Newton-Davis vs. Deadmau5, *All You Ever Want* (Dance Recording of the Year); Rihanna, *Good Girl Gone Bad* (International Album of the Year); Alex Cuba, *Agua Del Pozo* (World Music Album of the Year); Mikey Dangerous, *Don't Go Pretending* (Reggae Recording of the Year); Jully Black, *Revival* (R&B/Soul Recording of the Year); Belly, *The Revolution* (Rap Recording of the Year). *Sway* congratulates this year's winners.

NEW FACE OF CANADA

Almost half the people in the Toronto region are visible minorities, according to new census data, which shows the face of Canada continues to change from the country's European origins.

Statistics Canada released the latest information from the 2006 census this January, and it shows that, 16.2 per cent of the population across Canada identified themselves as a visible minority — that's more than five million Canadians.

The national figures show the increasing ethnic diversity of the Canadian population over the past 25 years. In 1981, there were just over one million Canadians who were visible minorities, representing less than five per cent of the population.

Locally, the visible minority population exceeds the national average. In what's known as Toronto's census metropolitan area, 42.9 per cent of the population identified themselves as a visible minority. A total of 27.8 per cent of the visible minority population was born in Canada.

The largest visible minority population was South Asian (684,070), followed by Chinese (486,325) and black (352,220).

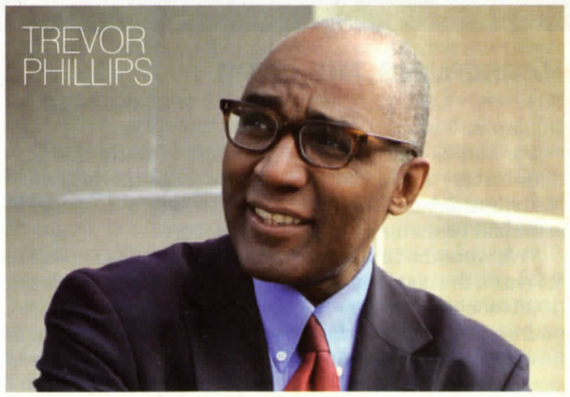
THE BRITS LOVE US, THEY REALLY LOVE US

Trevor Phillips, head of Britain's Commission on Equality and Human Rights, praised Canada's unique approach to diversity while on a recent visit to Toronto. "You've found a way of negotiating differences successfully that's possibly unique in the world," Phillips told the *Toronto Star*. "I think it's because you regard immigration as a plus, a welcome thing, while we regard it with suspicion. We need a little bit more of what you've got." Britain is in the process of incorporating a points system, similar to Canada's, in order to deal with an expected increase in immigration applicants.

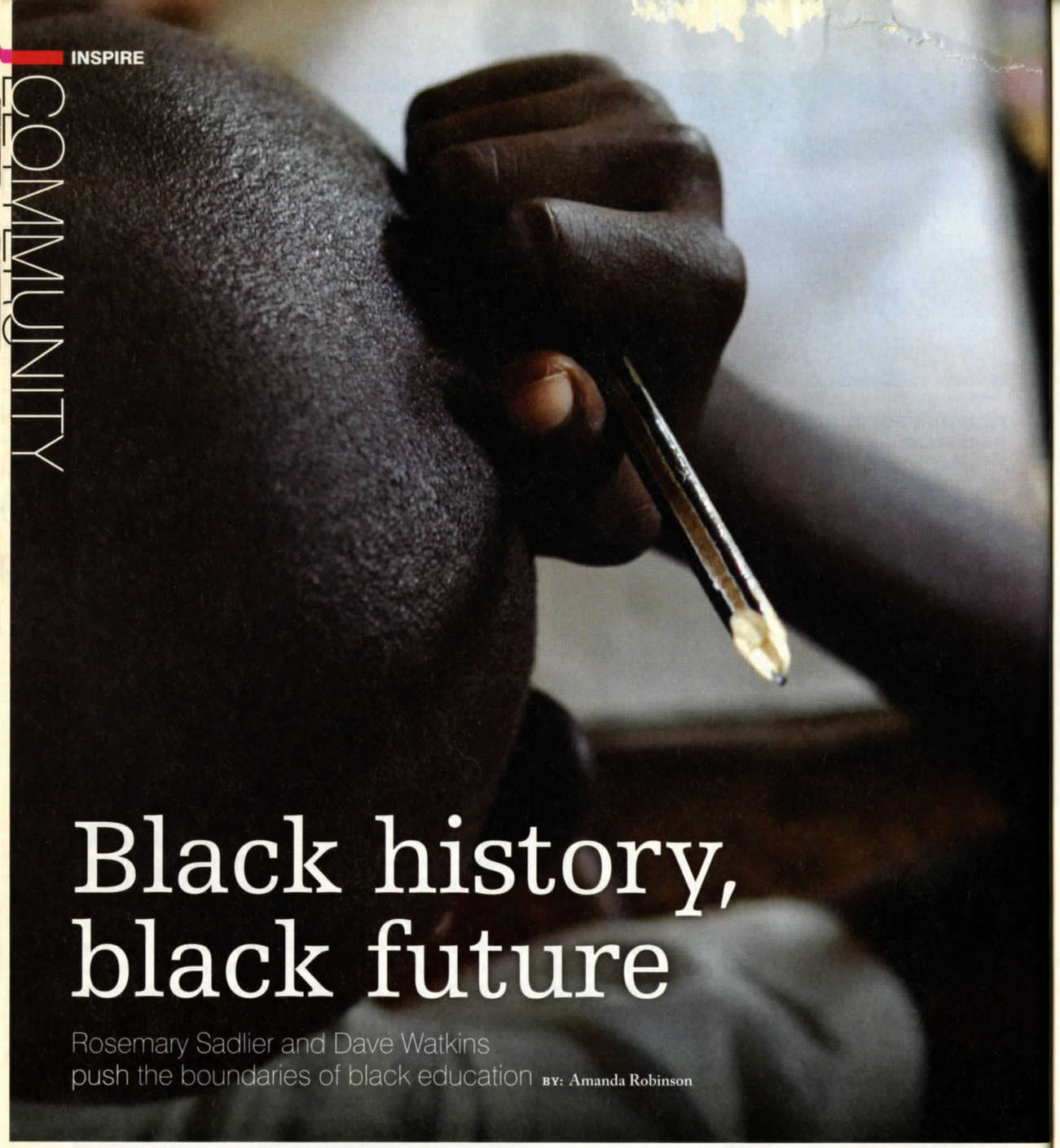
AFRICAN LEADER OPPOSES POLITICAL TRANSITION

Voting for the opposition MDC party is tantamount to wasting votes, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe said in a recent speech. Addressing thousands of people at Stanley Square in Makokoba, Bulawayo, Mugabe said the MDC should not be allowed to rule their country since it is led by puppets of Western countries who would reverse the gains of the country's independence.

"You can vote for them [MDC], but that will be a wasted vote. You will be cheating yourself as there is no way we can allow them to rule this country," said Mugabe, drawing applause from an enthusiastic crowd. "We have a job to do and that is to protect our heritage. The MDC will not rule this country. It will never, ever happen. "



COMMUNITY



Black history, black future

Rosemary Sadlier and Dave Watkins push the boundaries of black education BY: Amanda Robinson

NARROWING THE GAPS

ROSEMARY SADLIER IS determined to narrow the historical gap in Canada.

For Sadlier, the historical gap is the failure of Canadian history and society to acknowledge the historical contributions of African Canadians along with the generational roots many of them have here.

"We were the first immigrant, non-European group to arrive on these shores … [but] when you're a black person in this society, you cannot help but realize your presence, your contribution, your achievements, your definition of beauty, all of those things that other people are able to see and experience, are not for you," says Sadlier.

Without learning about her own history during high school, Sadlier admits she lacked self-confidence and felt disconnected.

"I was turned off school. [It would have been] incredibly helpful for me to know that the people I descended from achieved so much," she says.

It wasn't until she started participating in informal African history discussions that Sadlier found a sense of self. Sadlier's own family has been in Canada since the 1700s, migrating from Arkansas as Black Loyalists to Oxford County and St. John, New Brunswick. She was born and raised in Toronto and is the author of four books — one of them the bestselling and award-winning *The Kids' Book of Black Canadian History* — as well as a historian and the president of the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS).

The OBHS is a non-profit charity founded by Dr. Daniel G. Hill as a way of preserving and promoting black history in Ontario. One year after its creation in 1979, the OBHS pushed for the formal recognition of Black History Month in Toronto.

More personally, Sadlier has taken up the fight to improve the historical presence of black Canadians. One of Sadlier's greatest battles in helping to change the historical dialogue was pushing for Black History Month to be celebrated provincially in 1993 and nationally in 1996.

Says Sadlier: "Black History Month is a significantly important celebration in a place like Canada, where so much of our story has yet to be told, where the possibility that a person of African origin being Canadian is routinely challenged. Black History Month is a way to shape and change the perception of who and what a Canadian is."

With her own books and the OBHS school presentations, conferences, heritage tours, archival materials and Black History Month celebrations, Sadlier believes that exposing youth to black history will only lead them down a positive road.

"Not that every black child is attracted to a violent lifestyle, but often you're not strong enough to avoid negative influences because you don't have anything to hold onto.

"Everyone that's black in this country feels a certain level of disconnection to this country at some point … and if you have black history, that's a way of being connected."

STUDYING OUR STORY

EACH DAY, SCHOOL teacher David Watkins sees the disenfranchisement revealed by Sadlier acted out in his predominately African-Canadian classroom. On the walls, Watkins hangs sheets of paper with the words "ignorant," "illiterate," "baby mama," "violent," "criminal" and "poor" written out. The negative words refer to the question Watkins asked his students: "What is being black in Canada?" For him, the students' responses are simply the results of negative reinforcement perpetuated since the days of slavery.

"A story comes down to three different components: what was, what happened to change it and the result. When we study what's changed our story, we come to understand that it's slavery and colonialism," says Watkins. "In class, we're studying ancient Africa and what I'm trying to get them to understand is the result of the story they see now is not a true reflection of our history."

Watkins, 44, has been a teacher for 18 years and has been teaching the Canadian-African Studies course at Weston Collegiate Institute for seven years. This past October, he was recognized for his innovative teaching techniques, receiving the 2007 Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Since then, Watkins has become a prominent voice in the media, speaking on subjects ranging from youth violence to Africentric schools, an educational transition of which he is a strong supporter.

Watkins is determined to change the mindset of his mostly black students since he believes they are constantly receiving a negative image of themselves from the media and society. He's created three major projects that force students to analyze history and relate it to the black community's present situation.

> Everyone that's black in this country feels a certain level of disconnection to this country at some point … and if you have black history, that's a way of being connected.
>
> — *Rosemary Sadlier*

The first project is focused on the "Hero Deficit."

"In comic books, most of the heroes are white," Watkins says, so he asks his students to draw a hero that focuses exclusively on fixing the problems in the black community.

"They actually have to think about what are the ills of the community and then they have to think about how they're going to actually stop it."

The second project deals with the "Slave Mentality," in which students use videos and class material to write an essay on the slave trade, and how it relates to the current black experience. The final project is the "Family Tree," which asks students to detail their own family history and explain why they might have difficulties in obtaining any information.

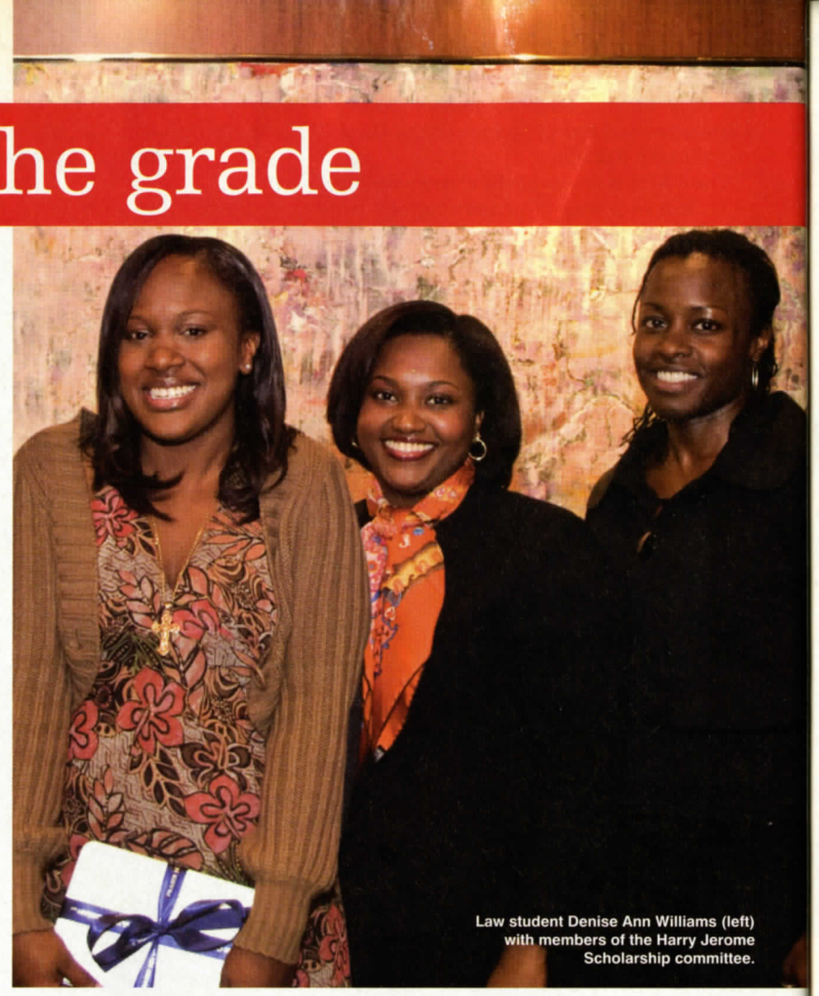
"Without your history, you're in trouble," says Watkins, who relates to that phrase on a personal level. He wasn't comfortable with his own history because, unlike his peers in Canada, he couldn't trace his roots to the Caribbean islands — his roots were embedded deep in the American South and slavery. However, with the help of an eccentric professor of African studies at Indiana State University, Watkins gained insight into his own history and found inspiration in the words of the helpful professor.

"He told me that I was a strong individual because of the strength my ancestors showed by escaping from slavery," Watkins reveals. "In that second, my mind changed. It was an enlightenment … it changed who and how I thought I was, and it gave me a lot of self-esteem. And from that moment, there was nothing I felt I couldn't do because if [my ancestors] could run with dogs chasing them, hiding at night and coming into an environment that was foreign to them, then what can't I do? Now, there's nothing I can't do." ■

Making the grade

Osgoode student receives first ever Harry Jerome Scholarship for black law students

BY: Kristine Maitland



Law student Denise Ann Williams (left) with members of the Harry Jerome Scholarship committee.

DENISE ANN WILLIAMS is going to be a tough act to follow in terms of academic excellence. The studious 24-year-old has already shown her intellectual mettle, graduating from York University with an Honours BSc with First Class Distinction, while also receiving a number of awards and commendations, including the inaugural BBPA Harry Jerome Scholarship for black law students, which is sponsored by multinational law firm Fraser Milner Casgrain (FMC).

"It's a great honour," says Williams. "I feel privileged to be singled out for this recognition while among so many worthy candidates."

But what truly makes Williams stand out is her focused determination and commitment to creating positive change. While a student at the University of Ottawa, she attended the Black Law Students Association of Canada Conference in 2007 where she heard York Region Police Staff Sergeant Chris Bullen address the crowd. Seeing a black man in law enforcement who headed the department for traffic surprised Williams, and she was intrigued by how this officer would make a difference in racially-motivated traffic stops.

"We have a lot of black guys who are over-policed when it comes to traffic stops," says Williams. "Cops can stop them to check for insurance, but [nobody] knows why the police are stopping them."

From Markham, Ontario, Williams was well aware how racial profiling is an issue with traffic offences. She was "blown away" by the initiatives that Bullen introduced in his own police unit and showing how network savvy she was, Williams approached him after his presentation to ask if he needed any help.

Bullen had just the project for this young law student — the York Regional Police Equity Committee was developing a policy for bias-fee policing. Williams assisted with research and editing, and the project proved to be a good opportunity to get a glimpse behind the thin blue line.

"They have all the power, especially in the traffic department," notes Williams. "There are a lot of ways that racial profiling can be perpetuated through the jobs that the police do on a daily basis."

Williams' vehement opposition against racial profiling stems from the lessons passed down by her mother. A native of Trinidad and the primary parent of three daughters, Williams highlights the strength her mother instilled in each member of the family.

"She did everything she could," she says. "Whether it was putting us in sports or helping with homework, she did anything possible, even if it meant working extra hours."

The elder Williams not only helped her children, but acted as their role model as well by working and attending school part-time to successfully complete her training as a nurse.

But while her mother's lessons of success provide support and stability for Williams, she is also a witness to the black community's lack of representation within the legal profession and is frustrated by the lack of black students in law as well as in other fields like medicine.

"More can be done to facilitate more minorities getting in. It's the way that admissions are tailored," says Williams, who cites tuition fees, the LSAT scoring system and a lack of connections within the profession as barriers to success.

However, Williams feels she is up to the academic challenge faced by every law school student, and she believes her career path is clear.

"I hope to add to Ontario's judiciary diversity by becoming a judge," reveals Williams. "I also plan to use my law degree to effect policy change that will positively impact the daily lives of blacks and other minorities across Canada." ■

Inspiring children

Jazz legend follows the beat of a different drum

BY: Lenny Stoute

AT 70-PLUS YEARS, jazz legend Archie Alleyne continues to gig at a rate that would leave players half his age out of breath. In the early 1950s, Alleyne took his self-taught style from his kitchen to Toronto's then red-hot jazz scene. A few years later, he became the house drummer at the Town Tavern, accompanying U.S. jazz legends Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster.

After a car crash in 1967, Alleyne left music in order to bring soul food to Toronto with his restaurant The Underground Railroad; he didn't play publicly again until 1982. Since then, Alleyne has been a much sought after musician and an avid social activist.

In the late 1980s, Alleyne and friend Rudy Webb created Evolution of Jazz (EOJ), a music and dance program aimed at connecting black youth with musical legacies. Today, Alleyne continues the work he started with EOJ through the Archie Alleyne Scholarship & Bursary Fund (AASBF).

"During the early days of EOJ," says Alleyne, "we focused on school children in deprived areas where I felt the attention was most needed. For the most part, we'd go into the school with a little troupe of musicians and dancers. If there was funding, we'd rent a local theatre and bus the kids in. Part of it was to expose the youth to styles of black music that wasn't angry music."

The funding for the EOJ program came entirely from the Ontario Arts Council, and it was launched at a time when the provincial government was frantic to fund programs that addressed the circumstances and conditions of troubled neighbourhoods. "On occasion, certain schools had enough talented and committed kids that we went in there and mentored them through the show," says Alleyne, "but all the performers in the show were kids from this school. After those shows, you could just see the pride and confidence radiating from them. We felt if, at the end of the day, we'd inspire one kid to take up music, then it was worth it."

Today, along with EOJ, Alleyne uses the AASBF to provide specific support for aspiring young musicians. The fund consists of a mentorship program as well as an award that is provided to applicants in recognition of their achievements and to assist them in their musical education.

"The great thing about this program is it gives kids the opportunity to use their talents in a constructive way," says Alleyne, "instead of it being wasted on the streets. Hopefully, we can continue to grow and help even more people. It is my hope that people will jump on board and support what we're doing."

The AASBF is open to students up to the age of 25, who are enrolled in a jazz program, graduates of a secondary school or in full-time attendance at a post-secondary institution, maintaining academic excellence and contributing to their community. (For more information visit kollage.ca.) ■

From left to right: Renee'e Rawlins Thomas, Shani Leatham (back) Monique Taylor (front) and Kim Tul founded a group called Black Pearls that provides role models and scholarships for black women.

Photo by Vince Talotta for the *Toronto Star*

Girl power

Female mentorship programs making a difference in Toronto

BY: Rea McNamara

WE TEND TO forget the impact female mentors have had in our young lives. Whether it was a teacher, coach, counsellor or family member, we relied upon them to help us navigate the way towards womanhood.

In today's climate of negative media stereotypes of black women and less positive females as role models, young females are continuing to slip through the cracks of our schools and communities.

Yet there are those who still realize the importance of building relationships with the next generation of women and encouraging them to challenge, question, lead and, most importantly, community build. It's also important to recognize our own personal potential in taking responsibility and continuing this work with young women.

Two female mentorship programs are changing the ways our young females are forced to redefine themselves and encouraging a community to once again invest in the future.

BLACK PEARLS

WHEN BLACK PEARLS Community Services began three years ago, the tight-knit group of educated and ambitious female professionals formed because of their shared concern for the negative media stereotypes and images of black women. At first, the non-profit group fulfilled their mandate through hosting financial seminars, creating a book club, funding youth scholarships and even holding an annual fundraising black-tie gala.

But executive director Renee Rawlins Thomas – a former Miss Barbados who is now a Toronto high-school guidance counsellor and mother of two – saw the need to reach out even further and provide the means to support young females susceptible to the stereotypes that can undermine their confidence and development. So Black Pearls is hatching Project B, a weekly summer initiative that will take place at the YWCA in the Galloway and Kingston area of Scarborough.

Currently a doctorate candidate in education at the University of Toronto, Thomas pinpoints the necessity for female mentorship programs in Toronto. The research she has done references black women and the emotional and mental toll some experience in trying to fit within the dominant white beauty standard. "As a black female within the black community, in seeing these media images, [it's necessary to know] how to negotiate those images," she concludes, emphasizing the need to support black females in defining their self-image on their own terms.

Project B will mentor 20 to 30 young females between the ages of 13 to 18. While there will be therapy counselling to aid young females in developing strategies to counter and challenge the pervasive negative stereotypes, there will also be an emphasis on career development in areas like etiquette. "There's empowerment in knowing how to use a full place-setting, especially when an increasing number of job interviews are elegant dinners in restaurants that require proper conduct," Thomas explains.

Black Pearls will also be absorbing their highly successful financial seminars into Project B, offering money matters advice that will give young women the chance to develop savings habits earlier. She recognizes how materialism and disposable incomes lead many young women to fall into the trap of applying for their first credit card in university where you eventually "start your life [out of school] with a $2,000 credit limit that is maxed out and you can't pay it back." Thomas doesn't think that many young females are aware of the number of financial resources that are available to them such as scholarships and bursaries.

Black Pearls is also working towards building networks with other female organizations and developing a volunteer database that can support organizations needing that support.

Ultimately, Thomas is excited by Black Pearls' new development and can't wait until the summer rolls around. "It's going to be a fun program – a modern take on Girl Guides with a black feminist twist to it. I think it's something people will enjoy and participate in."

H.A.I.R.

IT'S TUESDAY EVENING within the graffiti interiors of The Spot, Jane and Finch's bustling youth drop-in centre. More than 20 outspoken girls sit around in a circle of chairs, studying scattered photos on the floor: a flat-topped Grace Jones and a head-wrapped Erykah Badu; Tyra Banks' straight bangs contrasted by Alek Wek's shorn scalp.

Questions fly. Is a shaved head just as beautiful as a long weave? It's the ensuing heated debate on the differing representations of black beauty that makes Sophia Daley feel like they're another step closer towards what she aims to do.

As the facilitator and creator of Helping Adolescents Improve their Reflections (H.A.I.R.), it's her goal to encourage these young women to develop positive, healthy self-images through her unique program.

"Everything comes right back to them [in] making the experience for themselves," says Daley, also a hair stylist. "How do we work these things through? How do we feel beautiful, and how do we get to a place where we feel good no matter what anyone else says, [so that] nothing can shake us."

The seasonal seven-week program focuses on hair, image, nutrition and self-care. But Daley mentors participants ranging between 13 and 21 in improving their self-esteem and confidence. Of course, most of them weren't expecting this – they thought it would be free makeovers and hair product advice.

"They really come in thinking that they're just learning how to do their hair," Daley says, laughing at their initial reactions. "Then I get into what the program is about and I say to them: 'You now need to be able to see if this is something you want to do for yourself'."

Daley has weathered the divided Jane and Finch neighbourhood lines to create a safe space where participants can unpack these issues and more, like school violence and gangs. Providing healthy home-cooked meals and steady encouragement to speak openly has helped "the young women engage as if they all live in the same backyard," Daley says.

Samantha Domize, 20, found out about H.A.I.R. through a flyer she picked up on the bus. Even though the program was aimed at females under 17, she called and emailed Daley, begging to get involved. She became one of the first participants, and three cycles later, is training to be a co-facilitator. The Seneca Newham student helps lead workshops and proudly considers her self an "older sister" to the young females.

"I don't act as an older person; I'm on the same level, but there's still respect," she clarifies. "They're not afraid to hold things back – and that's really cool."

It's break time, and the participants excitedly discuss the upcoming "Hair Pamper Me Day" field trip that will take them to a Scarborough hair salon for a free style. H.A.I.R. is approaching its one-year anniversary, and Daley has been overwhelmed by the community support and parents' glowing responses.

It has encouraged her to pursue community partnerships and consider expanding the program in locations such as Scarborough and Rexdale.

"I always leave the sessions feeling energetic and so in awe of the young women and myself, and the workshops that happen because of the experience that it creates," says Daley. "So for me, overall, it just adds to that growth and fuelling of my spirit in continuing this work for young women." ■

Excited girls from the H.A.I.R girls program jump for joy at The Spot drop-in centre in the Jane and Finch area.

Photo by Joyce Wong

Spring fling

This season, makeup artists are having **love affairs** with **colourful eyes**, deeply shaded lips and **gold-kissed cheekbones,** perfect for dark-skinned beauties. Recreating these looks at home has never been so easy. **Get ready to flirt!** BY: Ingrie Williams

THE TREND: BRIGHT, BOLD EYES

Why you'll love it:
"Bright candy colours like yellow, blue and violet will give your usual look a refreshing new makeover," says Toronto makeup artist Mary Dang. "Adding a punch of colour makes all the difference. There are no rules when it comes to using bright colours, just have fun with it and remember that a little goes a long way."

Insider tips:
- For an everyday daytime look, opt for sheer coverage and use an eye shadow brush to sweep colour over the eyelid from lash line to crease.
- At night, pump up the volume with a more opaque effect and use your fingers to dab on shadow. Use black liner to line the upper and lower eyes.

Get the look:
MAC eye shadow in Chrome Yellow, $16.50, maccosmetics.com.
L'Oreal Paris HIP bright shadow duo #224 Showy, $9.95 loreal.com.
Cargo Cosmetics eye shadow in Costa Rica, $18.50, cargocosmetics.com.

Don't forget:
Use a matte foundation and sheer or clear lip gloss so that you don't take away from the focus – your eyes.

On model:
Cropped jacket, Kenneth Cole. 1-800-652-9839, Bamboo print scarf, Banana Republic, 1-888-BR-STYLE.

THE TREND: AFTER-DARK LIPS

Why you'll love it:
"Retro-inspired makeup is always classic," says makeup artist Mary Dang. "Instead of bright reds, the update is to use wine, plums and brown-burgundy reds. Go for matte or cream formulas — shiny dark lips are out!"

Insider tips:
- Start by lining top and bottom lips, then fill them in with lip liner (it prevents your lipstick from bleeding).
- For precision, apply lipstick with a lip brush. Start with a sheer layer and then add to it for a deeper shade.

Get the look:
Susan Posnick Cosmetics ColorForever Lip Colour in Stevie/Go Your Own Way, $25, available at select prestige MediSpas and dermatologists, nordicselfcare.com 1-888-201-1875.
Cover Girl Outlast Smoothwear Lipliner in Raisin, $8.49, covergirl.ca.
L'Oreal Colour Riche LipColour in Pure Burgundy, $10.50 loreal.com.
Revlon ColourStay lip colour in Divine Port Wine, $12.95 revlon.com.
Maybelline New York Moisture Extreme Lipcolour in Real Raisin, $8.99, maybellinenewyork.ca.

Don't forget:
Keep your eye shadow and blush minimal. Try lining your top lash line with liquid liner and, for cheeks, stick with a matte neutral coloured blush.

On model:
Twist-front dress, Banana Republic, 1-888-BR-STYLE.

THE TREND: GLOWING SKIN

Why you'll love it:
"Healthy, luminous skin is hot this year, and this look works on everyone," says makeup artist Mary Dang. "It's all about using highlighters in golden hues with peachy pink or apricot undertones to warm the skin."

Insider tips:
- Powder highlighter is easier to blend, although a liquid formula will last longer.
- Apply a neutral, beige blush on the apples of your cheeks. Then add highlighter on the upper cheekbones and the eyebrow bone. Be sure to blend well with a large blush brush.

Get the look:
Revlon Golden Affair Sculpting Blush in #420 Naughty or Spice, $18, and Diamond Lust Sheer Shadow in #605 Grab Me Gold, $15.5, both revlon.com.
MAC Bronzing Powder in Refined Deeper Bronze, $24, maccosmetics.com.
Cover Girl TruBlend Naturally Luminous Bronzer in #435 Golden Sunrise, $13.99, covergirl.ca

Don't forget:
If you're not sure where to place the highlighter, just smile and apply on apples of the cheek in a circular motion, sweeping it up to the temples.

On model:
One-shoulder top, Joeffer Caoc, joeffercaoc.com. Drop earrings, Rita D., from Elsa Reia N Studio, reiastudio.com, 1-866-297-9722.

Photography: Alexis Finch
Makeup and Hair: Mary Dang, artistsbytimothypriano.com
Styling: Ingrie Williams
Model: Shirley from Next Models Canada
Special thanks: Lorraine Hartnett

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From left to right: Jamaican High Commissioner, Her Excellency Evadne Coye, CTV Diversity Producer, Ms. Karlene Nations and Seed of life's President, Ms. Lanre Tunji-Ajayi.

A cross Section of attendees at the Hope Gala & Awards 2007

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It's the Mother's Day weekend; why not treat somebody special to a dinner with the High Commissioners, Consul Generals, Politicians and many other attending dignitaries.

Healthy hair

BY: KRIZIA

This spring, breathe new life into your hair with tips from celebrity hair stylist Amoy Pitters

CELEBRITY NEW YORK hairdresser Amoy Pitters has coiffed the tresses of famous celebrities such as supermodel Iman, Naomi Campbell and Angela Bassett.

After a recent chat with Pitters, she revealed that many black women have misconceptions about their hair that prevent them from growing hair that won't break.

Following Pitters' recommendations will surely help you to grow healthier hair this spring.

AFRO HAIR

- Remember to wash your hair once a week to ensure healthy hair growth and scalp stimulus.
- When it comes to using oils to condition the hair, avoid mineral base and synthetic-oils and opt for natural products such as castor, jojoba, coconut oils, shea butter or ojon oil.
- Regardless of the chosen hairstyle, treat your hair to weekly deep conditioning treatments, which are important in keeping the hair more resilient.
- Hair colour should always be done by a professional to ensure proper hair care and also to ensure that you are sporting the right base colour for your skin complexion.

CHEMICALLY RELAXED

- If you are not a professional hairdresser, you should not do your own chemical relaxers, and you should refrain from applying relaxers for friends and family members. Doing so could cause serious damage.
- Over-the-counter relaxers are not the best buys since you may be buying the wrong strength for your hair texture. This might result in hair breakage.
- It's essential to use a neutralizing shampoo after the relaxer to bring back the PH level of the hair and avoid breakage.

WEAVES / EXTENSIONS

- Weaves and extensions should never be worn months on end.
- Weaves and extensions must be renewed every 8 to 10 weeks. If you have chemically-relaxed hair, you should change you hairpieces when you get your touch-up done.
- Weekly deep conditioning treatments are a must.

BRAIDS

- Women who wear braids too tight may experience hair loss around their foreheads. Make sure to redo your braids every month.
- In the long run, braids will weaken the hair and subsequently cause the hair to snap off due to constantly pulling.
- Proper hair washing is very tricky with braids and it makes proper scalp washing and massaging almost impossible. Scalp stimulus is essential for hair growth, something women who wear long-term braids miss out on. ■

Hardcore FITNESS

Slice TV's Tommy Europe shares his unique approach to fitness BY: Chris Penrose

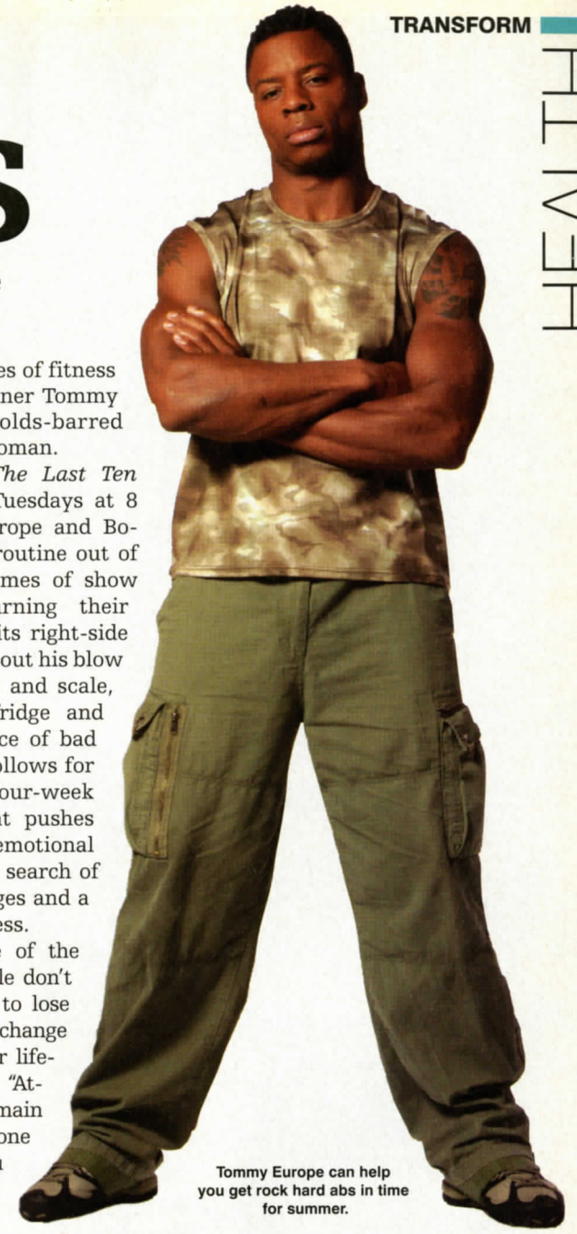
CANADIAN TELEVISION VIEWERS, especially those of us proud to sport the term "eighties babies," may remember the 90-second health segment *Body Break* with Joanne McLeod and Hal Johnson. Back in the day, McLeod and Johnson sported neon-coloured nylon workout suits while doling out the dos and don'ts of fitness. But with today's get-fit-fast mentality, the gentle routines and coupled-up afros of McLeod and Johnson just don't cut it. Instead, in an age when "reality" shows have taken over self-improvement viewing, Canada's new faces of fitness are military style trainer Tommy Europe and his no-holds-barred nutritionist Nadeen Boman.

As the hosts of *The Last Ten Pounds*, which airs Tuesdays at 8 p.m. on Slice TV, Europe and Boman make a weekly routine out of storming into the homes of show participants and turning their backward health habits right-side up. While Europe gets out his blow horn, measuring tape and scale, Boman scours the fridge and cupboards for evidence of bad eating habits. What follows for each contestant is a four-week training program that pushes participants to their emotional and physical limits in search of holistic lifestyle changes and a goal of total body fitness.

"I think that's one of the main things that people don't consider when trying to lose weight or do a major change in their fitness level or lifestyle," says Europe. "Attitude is one of the main components, and it's one of those things that you can take for granted. Everybody wants to do this or wants to do that, but are they willing to actually put in the work and do what it takes to reach the level that they want to achieve? So mindset and attitude is definitely one of the first things that needs to change."

Europe developed his demanding training style as a professional football player in the CFL. His regime begins with the "drill test," a series of tasks that allows him to assess an individual's physical fitness level. After gauging goals and abilities, the demanding drill sergeant supplements the tailored workout schedule with surprise visits (like a random 6:30 a.m. jog and cardio training in the park) and a final physical challenge (that has included a 56-storey stair climb and 5km wilderness run). Oh, and you can't forget that the final physical challenge is completed with a backpack full of bad habits from your previous lifestyle (such as lard, pop and sacks of sugar).

To create motivation, Europe also takes participants through the process of connecting their weight loss to an upcoming goal (such as a big event, an anniversary or a wedding) and giving them a hot new outfit — at least two sizes too small — to fit into at the end of four weeks. ■



Tommy Europe can help you get rock hard abs in time for summer.

Tips to shed your LAST 10 POUNDS

1. Get started. That is the main thing, and it's what stops most people from achieving their goals.
2. Get interested in nutrition. It's about what you put in your mouth, and when you put it in your mouth. Find a healthy balance in your diet.
3. Empower yourself with knowledge. If you don't really know your way around the gym, get yourself a trainer. If you are knowledgeable in the gym, but you've been doing the same thing over and over again, switch your program up. Go learn some new moves. Talk to others.
4. Surround yourself with positive people. There are negative people all around, but you can't worry about them or let them drag you down.
5. Realize that the sky is the limit! You're going to be more fit and healthier. You've got one life to live in this world, so you might as well live it to the fullest.

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Behind the seams

In our fair city, designers of **colour** are leaving a trail of thimbles, **straight pins** and thread all over the fashion biz. Looking for a **killer frock**, a shirt that fits like a glove or jewels that will make your jaw drop? **T-dot** talent has you stylishly covered. Here's our **springtime** shout out to a few of the names you should be shopping for this season, and **what they love** about making their mark.

Photography: David Hou, Fashion editor and stylist: Ingrie Williams,
Makeup: Kim Goodman, artistgrouplimited.com, Hair: Maria Bertrand, kasnique.ca
Photo assistant: Terri Hohenadel, Styling assistant: Abdi Olow
Shot on location at George Brown College, Casa Loma Campus, georgebrown.ca
Special thanks to: Marilyn McNeil-Morin, Paul Zanettos, Rosa Fracassa, Elmer Olsen,
NAM Model Management and Sutherland Models

Afrodelik Designs

Name behind the name: Ink-wielding soul sistah, Desiree Marshall
Style trademark: T-shirts featuring graphic, hand-drawn characters that celebrate the era of the almighty 'fro
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Marshall: "Being creative is very exciting, it makes me feel whole. I'm in the fashion industry, but I'm really an artist using fashion as my canvas."
Bookmark it: afrodelik.com
Buy it: Daddy Mack cotton T-shirt, $29, Afrodelik. Jeans, Diesel, $225 from Over the Rainbow, rainbowjeans.com. Hat and cuff, both H&M, hm.com

Greta Constantine

Names behind the name: Dynamic duo, Kirk Pickersgill and Stephen Wong
Style trademark: Effortless, creative jersey pieces — both elegant and edgy
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Pickersgill and Wong: "Working with friends in the industry and amazing new talent."
Bookmark it: gretacontstantine.com.
Buy it: Chocolate brown jersey gown with bronze studded neckline, $2195, Greta Constantine. Gold bangles, Garbo, available at The Bay, hbc.com.

Bustle

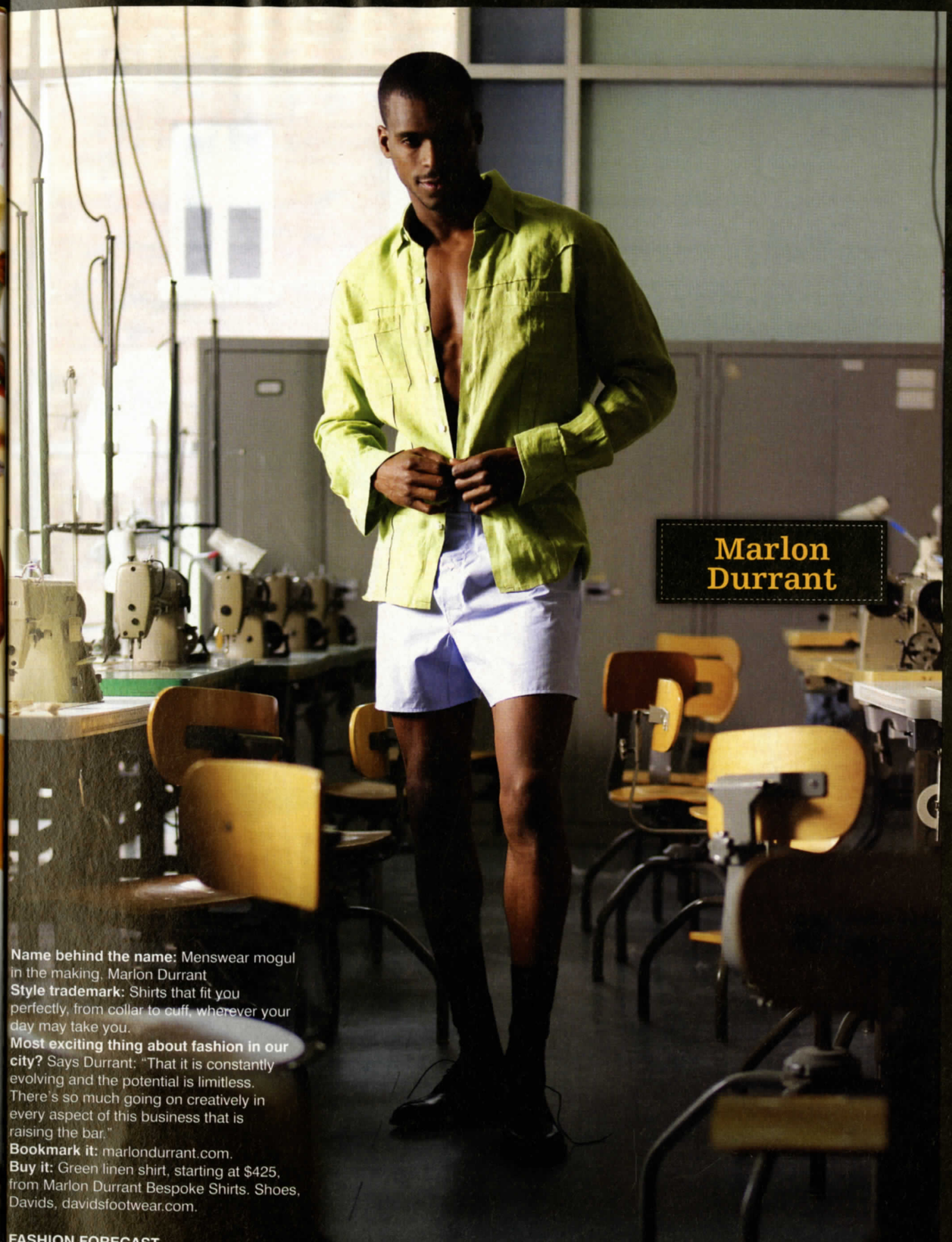
Names behind the name: Shawn Hewson and Ruth Promislow, wedded in work and pla
Style trademark: Quirky menswear that's always fresh, cool and moder
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Hewson and Promislow: "The people. There's
growing energy surrounding Canada's fashion industry and its consumer
who are really beginning to appreciate our home-grown talent.
Bookmark it: bustleclothing.com
Buy it: From left, yellow racing horse print trench, $525, blue tuxedo shirt, $165, ticking stripe tuxedo pan
$235; straw fedora, $55; lilac stripe blazer, $475; and tuxedo shorts, $215; yellow polka dot shirt, $175; sil
racing horse print bow tie, $125; all from Bustle

Colette Harmon

Name behind the name: Jewel wrangler with a deft touch, Colette Harmon
Style trademark: Mixing contrasting elements, such as metals, semi-precious stones,
decorative beads and crystals into breathtaking creations.
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Harmon: "Having my own store and
meeting new and interesting people."
Bookmark it: coletteharmon.com.
Buy it: Beveled crystal strands, $175-$275; Bib-style frosted leaf necklace, $550; Long
osette bead and frosted leaf necklace, $325, all from Colette Harmon.

Swaby

Name behind the name: Shernett Swaby, a top-five finalist on *Project Runway Canada* (season one
Style trademark: All sorts of 3D details from soft, romantic ribbons to architecturally crafted fold
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Swaby: "Knowing there is a lot
potential for growth and that we could be on the brink of becoming a real hot spot
Bookmark it: shernettswaby.com
Buy it: Teal silk chiffon ribbon dress, $1258; magenta wool crepe short sleeve jacket, $764; all from Swab



Marlon Durrant

Name behind the name: Menswear mogul in the making, Marlon Durrant
Style trademark: Shirts that fit you perfectly, from collar to cuff, wherever your day may take you.
Most exciting thing about fashion in our city? Says Durrant: "That it is constantly evolving and the potential is limitless. There's so much going on creatively in every aspect of this business that is raising the bar."
Bookmark it: marlondurrant.com.
Buy it: Green linen shirt, starting at $425, from Marlon Durrant Bespoke Shirts. Shoes, Davids, davidsfootwear.com.

FASHION FORECAST

Dream of turning your passion for fashion into a reality? George Brown College's Fashion Studies Program can help you start stitching together the skills you need to become the next big thing. Whether you want to be a designer, run your own business or navigate the global market, they have a program to match your career goals and have been turning out successful students for more than 40 years. Get down to the Berkeley Church (315 Queen St E.) on April 22nd for Signatures 2008 – the annual fashion show will feature projects from the graduating class, and more.

DRESSED TO THRILL:

MEN'S GUIDE TO SPRING FASHION

It's time to unzip that overstuffed overcoat and move on to lighter fashion fare. We suggest juicy colours and smart basics – a look that's equal parts laid-back and look-at-me.

BRIGHT DONE RIGHT
"Bold colours are big again and definitely catch the eye but make sure the shade complements your skin tone," Roberts says. "Men with darker complexions can wear deeper jeweled tones; those with lighter skin should stay away from colours that will dominate them." Here, we opted for a fresh alternative to a jean jacket. "Every man needs a great piece of outerwear," says Roberts. "It frames the body and sets a first impression." Cotton collarless jacket, $295, Lacoste, lacoste.com.

BUCKLE UP
A belt does more than hold your pants up; it helps define your frame. "A basic belt collection should include one black, one brown and one dressy style," says Roberts. Belt, H&M, $10, hm.com.

CHECK IT OUT
Accessories are a foolproof and budget-friendly way to add interest and personality to your outfit. "A scarf or cap in a print or colour will attract attention to your face and can play up your eyes or skin tone," says Roberts. Cotton scarf, H&M, $13, hm.com. Short-brimmed cap, Gorin from Harry Rosen, $35, harryrosen.com.

GET COLLARED
Take weekend dressing up a notch. "A polo shirt is versatile, comfy and masculine," says Roberts. In a neutral shade or something colourful, this classic always looks polished. After all, you never know who you're going to run into, even at the grocery store. Textured cotton polo, $88, Lacoste. lacoste.com.

BAG OF TRICKS
Psst! Those bulging pockets aren't fooling anyone, mister. Get a bag! "Knapsacks no longer cut it," says Roberts, "Use one large, catch-all bag for things you actually use. Woven canvas bag, Suede, $140, from Elsa Reia N Studio, reiastudio.com, 1-866-297-9722.

MIX MASTER
Pairing bright colours with neutrals always looks fresh, as long as the shapes are modern. "A tailored silhouette continues to be current," says Roberts. Pants – even khakis – that are fitted always look chic, never sloppy. If you have muscular legs and a bit of a booty, Roberts suggests staying away from any low-rise cuts. Seek out a pair with a light pinstripe or check print if you're feeling more daring. Merino wool pants, H&M, $60, hm.com.

SOCKIN' IT TO YA
When wearing light coloured footwear, "black or white sport socks are to be avoided at all costs," warns Roberts. "Instead, choose something that is in the same colour palette as the shoes." Leather wingtip shoes, Lacoste, $375, lacoste.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Alexis Finch
STORY AND STYLING: Ingrie Williams
MODEL: Ryan

SPRING FORWARD

WHOEVER SAID, "Clothes do not make the man" either didn't know how to dress very well or wasn't too concerned with the power of a first impression. If you're fashion-challenged, a visit to Dexter Roberts, corporate fashion consultant and owner of Style Conductor, will certainly cure you.

"It's my job to make sure that your clothes (the content) are consistent with your personality and lifestyle (the context) so that you project a consistent message to others and, more importantly, yourself," says Roberts. "In general, men don't know how to dress, and I want to bring a higher level of fashion- and self-awareness to them, give them the tools they need and provide a safe environment to discover a clear sense of who they are."

Reason enough to convert yourself? Read on for the scoop on what you should be wearing this season, then check out Roberts' exclusive offer for *Sway* readers on his website at styleconductor.com/sway.

DEXTER ROBERTS

Local models fro
Fusion V fashion

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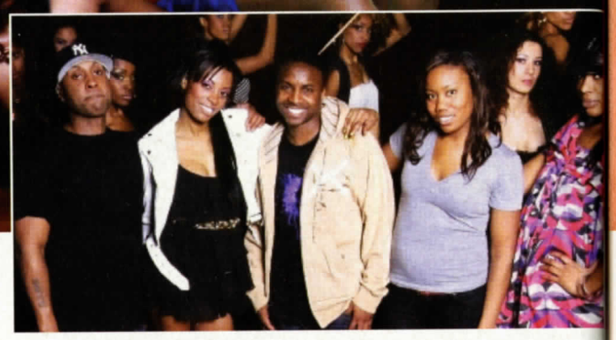
Model behaviour



From promoting diverse models to a growing fashion movement BY: Simona Siad

WHAT DO YOU do when you notice a dearth of black models, designers and stylists getting a chance to strut down Canadian fashion runways? Easy — you make your own runway.

At least that's what the Fusion fashion team decided to do. Comprised of a group of enterprising models, stylists, designers and marketing graduates, the group saw a gap in Toronto's somewhat exclusive fashion scene and decided to fill it.

"Being a former model in Toronto, I used to do fashion shows and I noticed there was always a lack of ethnic models," says Janelle Morgan, creator of the show and founder of her own modelling agency, Morgan Model Management.

"Whether it was Chinese, East Indian, black, it didn't matter. So I felt that I wanted to have a nurturing environment for models where they can kind of get developed, then be able to show people that we can walk the runway just as great as non-ethnic girls. From there, it just took off."

And it has taken off. From their first show hosted at a downtown nightclub pulling in 100 people, to recent shows at larger venues hosting 650-plus people, there is a definite buzz following their events. What started off as a grassroots concept to promote different types of beauty has truly evolved into a trendy underground fashion scene showcasing some of Toronto's premier black fashion talent.

"Fashion is exciting and we believe in everyone being able to express themselves," says Nicholla Duke, one of the Fusion stylists. "We are just a collective of people who wanted to work together and found fashion to be the one thing we had in common to unite us. We wanted to provide an alternative to the shopping scene at the mall. There is a lot of style in Toronto, but I think people don't have options."

According to Duke, the desire to create Fusion also came after seeing a lack of fashion opportunities and doors closing on young black designers due to a lack of support.

"Predominantly, we use third- or fourth-year fashion students. The problem is rising designers in Toronto don't have a forum to display their work, so it's our intention to give them that place and to help them gain customers and exposure," says Duke. "Most of them don't have the funds to get an entry into L'Oreal Fashion Week, or they need sponsorship. But these designers need a start, they need a chance and that's what we provide."

Despite all of their recent success, the roadblocks are still there. Funding is still an issue for the founding members and venues are still hard to book, with club managers shying away from holding an "urban" event.

"Our tagline is 'Urban Meets Vogue.' It's a blend of the urban community meeting high fashion. But I find that as soon as somebody reads our press kit or we mention that it's an urban show, they automatically associate it with negativity or something that may turn out to be violent," says Duke. "That's not the type of show we put on, but we do find it hard to find venues to give us the chance."

But with more and more people coming out to their events, major sponsors coming onboard and young designers asking to be included, Duke and Morgan are optimistic.

"No one believed we would get this far," says Morgan. "They didn't believe we had what it takes to continue, but we find it within ourselves to do it. We see the reason why. Every time we do a show, we find another reason to go forward."

"We're like, the little show that could," Duke quips.

"It's so true. We just keep going and going." ■

BLACK IS BACK

Ignored by mainstream fashion circles, African and Caribbean designers in Toronto are doing it on their own BY: Lisa Sterling

TORONTO IS RECOGNIZED as one of the hippest fashion spots on the globe. But whether you're designing at fashion college or spying the runway at L'Oreal Fashion Week, there is one unmistakable void.

"You just don't see enough black faces," says Carolyn Thompson, founder and designer of Honey Matthews Designs. "There is very little black influence of any kind. When it comes to fashion, there is a reason Canada is called the Great White North."

Unlike many of our fashion contemporaries south of the border, black designers and models struggle to find local outlets to display their talent. However, the tide seems to be shifting, and there is now a growing cadre of young, black entrepreneurs ready to stake their claim on Toronto's lucrative fashion market.

> When it comes to fashion, there is a reason Canada is called the Great White North

Chinedu Ukabam (pictured above) is the proud owner of Chinedesign, a five-year-old label based in Toronto. He believes that black Canadians who wear local black designers make a public statement about supporting their own.

"You are what we wear, at least while you're wearing it," Ukabam says, smiling. "Before you even open your mouth, your clothes do all the talking; so think carefully about what you intend to say."

Ukabam's smartly styled T-shirts speak for themselves. Displaying vibrant emblematic statements, including "power" and "royalty," his designs speak of joy and free-spiritedness. His line also dips into significant moments in music history by featuring music icons like Fela Kuti, Nina Simone and Peter Tosh.

"As a designer, especially a black designer, I want to feature our collective culture — past, present and future," he reveals. "This is how I can impact Toronto fashion; we're here and it's time to represent."

Twenty-three-year-old Amiga Taylor takes a different approach to moving past the racial divide in Toronto's fashion scene. She is the founder of Amiga Taylor Presents, a PR, event management and fashion-show coordination company to many rising black designers.

Most recently, Taylor coordinated Free up Entertainment's American Gangster Vintage Fashion Show, which featured *America's Next Top Model* winner, Eva Pigford.

"As the creative movers in fashion, we, as a community, have to use our own reference points for our designs and runway shows," says Taylor. With the growing desire of the public to promote black culture through fashion, there is a new opening for Carribean and African designers to break through. And although the fight for representation on the runway isn't over yet, Taylor and entrepreneurs like her are ready for the challenge.

"We've been ignored long enough," concludes Taylor. "Now it's time for us to influence the industry on our terms. We are the next big thing. We are fashion." ■

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ICHAEL "PINBALL" CLEMONS
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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Compiled by Simona Siad, Jon Sarpong, Jamilah Abu-Bakare, Chris Penrose, Cassandra Padmore and Alex Laws
Featuring photography by Steve Carty

When you think of a powerful person, do you think of a CEO or a community activist? What qualities do you associate with **powerful** people? *Sway* sought out some of the most influential people in our community and learned that power used correctly can **transform**, **build** and **inspire**. From CEOs leading corporations to artists using their craft to provoke ideas

Meet 26 people with sway

CHANGE MAKERS

MARGARETT BEST

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

As Ontario Minister of Health Promotion and MPP Scarborough–Guildwood, the Honorable Margarett Best is clearly powerful.

One of the few black MPPs currently occupying a seat at Queen's Park and holding a top position in the Ministry of Health Promotion for Canada's most populated province, Best has fully engaged communities toward healthy, active lifestyles and inspired many by her success in the process.

But to understand Best's commitment and determination to succeed in politics, you have to understand her history of survival. As a young girl, her mother passed away, leaving Best and her siblings dependent on family ties for their survival in Jamaica. Soon after, she immigrated to the United States, with the help of supportive relatives based in North America.

From the beginning, she had to help support her family and began working at the age of 14. Later, after attending Wayne State University for a few years, Best took a break from school to start a family in Toronto. After graduating from Osgoode Hall Law School, she became a notable lawyer and community activist. Last year, she was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 2007 provincial election, and appointed Minister of Health Promotion soon after.

POWER IS...

"Power is the ability to define success on your own terms, no matter where you may be in life. Certainly, as the Minister of Health Promotion and as the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood, I feel that I am in a position to make a difference on a larger scale. But I also recognize the importance of making an impact in small and meaningful ways and affecting individual lives in any positive way that I can." – J.S.

JEAN AUGUSTINE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Jean Augustine is a political trailblazer. In 1993, the Grenada-born school principal was the first African-Canadian woman elected to the Parliament of Canada. Responsible for Black History Month being recognized officially throughout Canada, Augustine is now leading the way as Ontario's first Fairness Co-Commissioner, responsible for identifying and removing barriers for new immigrants to Canada.

POWER IS...

"Power is the ability to move with people and to move people. I am going to go back to an old saying: if you want to go quickly, go alone; if you want to go far, take others with you. And so, I always take others with me.

I think I get my power from within. They say that there are some things that have to come from the inside. I get power from the fact that I came to this country knowing exactly who I was with my self-esteem intact. I learned very early that people cannot put you down, you put yourself down." – S.S

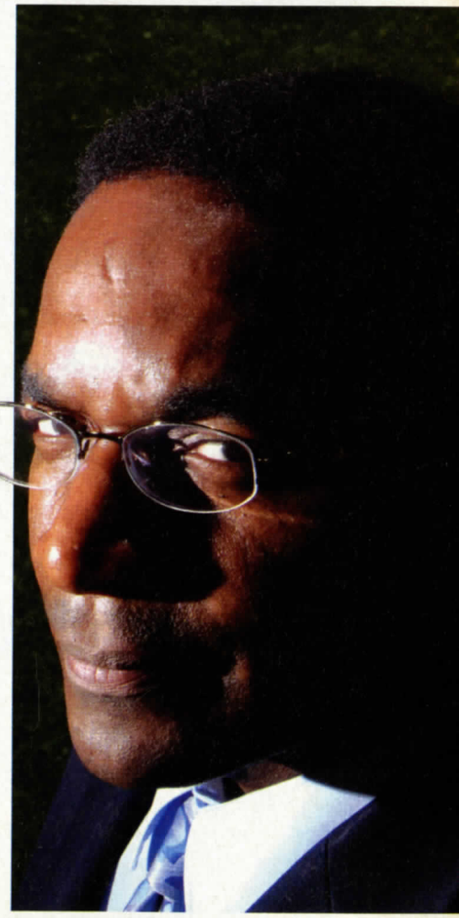
MICHAEL THOMPSON

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

When Michael Thompson wants to create change, he simply speaks up. As city councillor for Scarborough Centre since 2003, and as Toronto's only black councillor, his hard work and perseverance has brought light and attention to the troubling issue of rising violence in the city, leading to some of his recommendations being incorporated into the mayor's Community Action Plan. The plan brought forward a GTA-wide police task force on guns and gangs, an increase in the numbers of police officers on the street and a new young offender program designed to divert young people into jobs instead of jail.

POWER IS...

"Bringing people together from all different backgrounds to recognize common values to improve everyone's outcome. It's the ability to effect change." – A.L.



MYSTERIES

AUSTIN CLARKE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Austin Clarke is a literary giant in the Canadian and international arts world.

His novel, *The Polished Hoe,* won the 2002 Giller Prize, the 2003 Trillium Prize, the 2003 Commonwealth Literary Prize for Best Book and the 2004 Torgi Literary Award (by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind).

Known for his richly textured prose mixed with cultural and Caribbean nuances of the immigrant experience, he has inspired generations of young authors to dare to tell their own stories. Always working and writing, Clarke's next novel *More*, will be released early this year by publisher Thomas Allen.

Born and schooled in Barbados, Clarke immigrated to Canada in 1955 to study at the University of Toronto. After leaving university to work as a journalist and broadcaster, he says he struggled to find his place and style as a journalist at various newspapers. After being fired from *The Globe and Mail* for making a mistake covering a local board meeting, he turned his attention towards writing his first novel.

The world couldn't be more thankful.

POWER IS...

"Well, assuming that I have power, I would think my love of language, especially narrative, is where I have found my best, most peaceful moments. If I could analyze [my power] at all, it would be in my writing .... The biggest pleasure is to see and recognize that you have written something that is beautiful. That is how I judge my work." – S.S.

ANNEMARIE MORAIS

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

This has been a breakthrough year for Annemarie Morais, a talented film and television writer. First a hit at Sundance, her film, *How She Move*, was released in North America by Paramount. Morais' ability to give emotional credibility to gritty urban tales has made her one of Hollywood's most sought after talents.

POWER IS...

"Power is character that is unaffected by someone else's actions. In this industry, there are certain behaviours that are deemed acceptable, but that would have probably warranted a scolding when I was growing up. Power is the ability to walk away from situations with your morals, integrity and character intact." – J.S

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

George Elliott Clarke is many things: poet, writer, playwright, activist and English professor at the University of Toronto. His groundbreaking work explores and chronicles the experience and history of the black Canadian community of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In 2001, he received the Governor General's Award for poetry for his work, *Execution Poem*. His other distinctions include being honoured with the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Fellowship Prize in 2006 and the Order of Nova Scotia in 2007.

POWER IS...

"Power is the ability to govern others. That is also my definition of equality — the equal opportunity to exercise power, to be in government and the head of government. I don't believe so-called 'visible minorities' can consider ourselves to be equal until we can be the premiers, prime ministers and/or ambassadors to all of the nations in the world that Canada has relations with." – J.S.

Photo by Joyce Wong

ROYSON JAMES

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

As one of the few black voices in this country's most read newspaper, Royson James reaches millions of readers with his tempered, logical and insightful observations. As municipal affairs columnist for the *Toronto Star*, James is one of Canada's most respected journalists. Always willing to approach difficult situations with both nuance and tact, James is a much sought after public speaker, panellist and moderator.

POWER IS...

"Power is to be harnessed, shared, utilized for good, not feared as a tool of oppression. Believe this, and your life has been a charmed existence." – J.S

TIONARIES

REVOLUT

D'BI.YOUNG

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

To understand d'bi.young.anitafrika's power, you have to see her perform. Strong, passionate and revolutionary, anitafrika is well-known for her dub poetry, richly layered poetry and dynamic theatre performances.

Her current projects include completing the second and third plays from her biomyth-trilogy, *three faces of mudgu sankofa: androgyne, a poetic two-hander* and *word!sound!powah*, a dub opera (*blood.claat: one womban story* was anitafrika's first piece).

And her power continues. As one of Canada's most exciting artists, last year she won the 2007 Toronto Arts Council Foundation Emerging Artist award and recently released her second print collection of poetry, *rivers and other blackness between us*.

However, it has been the evolution from performing to mentoring Toronto youth in dub theatre (urban griots of t-dot and other projects) last summer that anitafrika admits has brought her life full circle.

POWER IS...

"I see myself as extremely powerful. I think we all are. I think to recognize one's power is even more important, particularly when we are living in a society that glorifies apathy, so it's very important to not only recognize your power but put it to some sort of use.

Occupying the space as a leader, teacher and elder is one of the most beautiful things about growing older. You recognize you are learning from those who came before you and from those who came after. I turned 30 in December and to recognize that as an induction into this new role of power called 'eldership' is an incredible process. It's really important to teach and as you teach you learn. You not only get to realize the value of yourself, but you get to know the value of yourself in relation to community." – S.S.

BLACUS NINJAH

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Blacus Ninjah (born Atiba Camara-Laye Ralph), respected MC and recently-dubbed activist, has his pulse on Jane and Finch. A resident of the neighbourhood since childhood, Ninjah followed in his stepfather's community-building footsteps and found himself representing his neighbourhood positively throughout 2007 — on radio and in print. Look out for his new album in 2008, aptly titled *Blacus Ninjah, The Voice of Jane and Finch*.

POWER IS...

"I am trying to be a person of power every day. Power is purpose. Power is knowledge. Power is wisdom." – J.A.B.

TREY ANTHONY

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Last year was a groundbreaking one for Toronto funny woman trey anthony. With her new play *I Am Not A Dinner Mint* in production and *Da Kink In My Hair* on London stages, anthony brought her principled beliefs in power to her role as executive producer and co-creator for her groundbreaking television show *Da Kink in My Hair*. Black, queer and feminist, anthony is only too pleased to break new ground.

POWER IS...

"I use my power to ensure we have people of colour in the writing room and on staff. For me, it's about trying to say that I'm here and this is my opportunity to let other people in." – J.A.B.

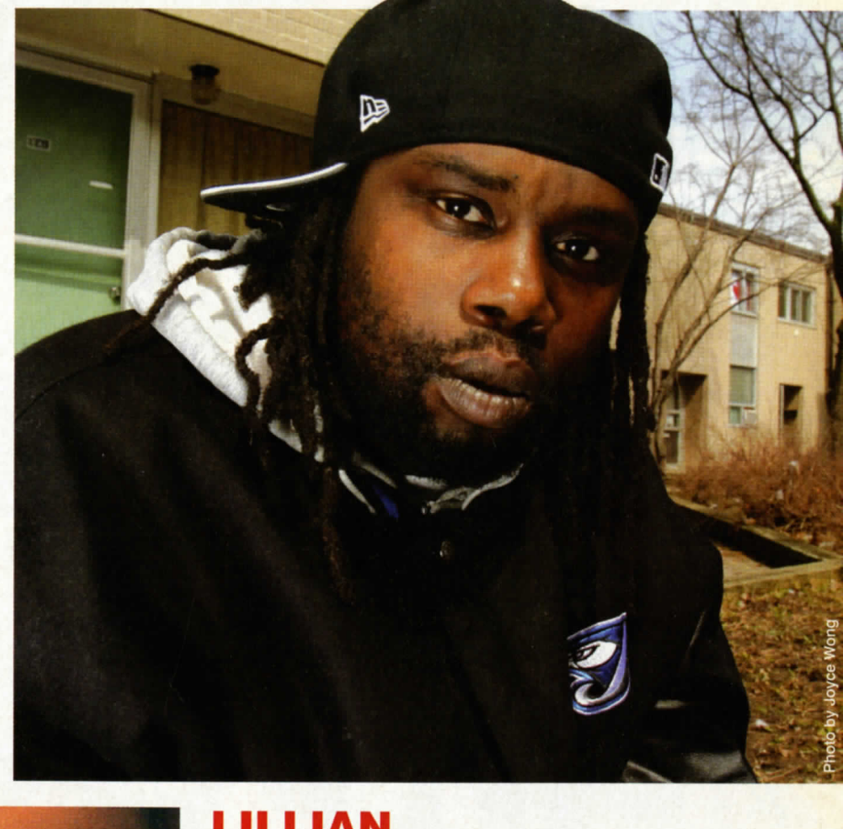


Photo by Joyce Wong

LILLIAN ALLEN

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Poet and professor Lillian Allen links power to empowerment and participation. Allen teaches creative writing at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) faculty of liberal studies, where she inspires students with her passion and commitment to advocacy on world issues. As a dub poet, she insists culture is critical to our community's quest for influence, especially in the Canadian context. Proud of her tenure at OCAD, Allen embraces challenging students to know themselves, their cultures and thus define their futures.

POWER IS...

"Power is the ability to determine your destiny. The most important part of my work is to see young people transform their lives." – J.A.B

AKIL AUGUSTINE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Akil Augustine gets excited when he talks about the young basketball talent bursting out of Toronto.

And Augustine (pictured left), a sports journalist and producer for NBAXL and creator of Screen Savior Entertainment, with clients like Maple Leaf Sports and Raptors NBATV, knows his basketball.

Five years ago, he teamed up with star basketball player and King of Toronto street ball champ Vidal Massiah to create The Hoop Factory, a high-intensity premier development camp for young basketball players, like Keaton Cole, 18, pictured right, who will be attending Western Carolina University in the fall.

Now, with a number of their players making the jump to Division I schools in the United States, an All-Star All Canada tournament set for the spring and a trip planned to Senegal to shoot a National Film Board documentary with the players, it's safe to say it's become more of a movement than a basketball camp.

POWER IS...

"We have the power to help the next generation of Canadian basketball players, and that's a power you can't take for granted and you have to take seriously.

I'm proudest of the kids we have worked with and what they have made themselves into. It's amazing seeing them get scholarships – an education – from the game of basketball." – S.S.

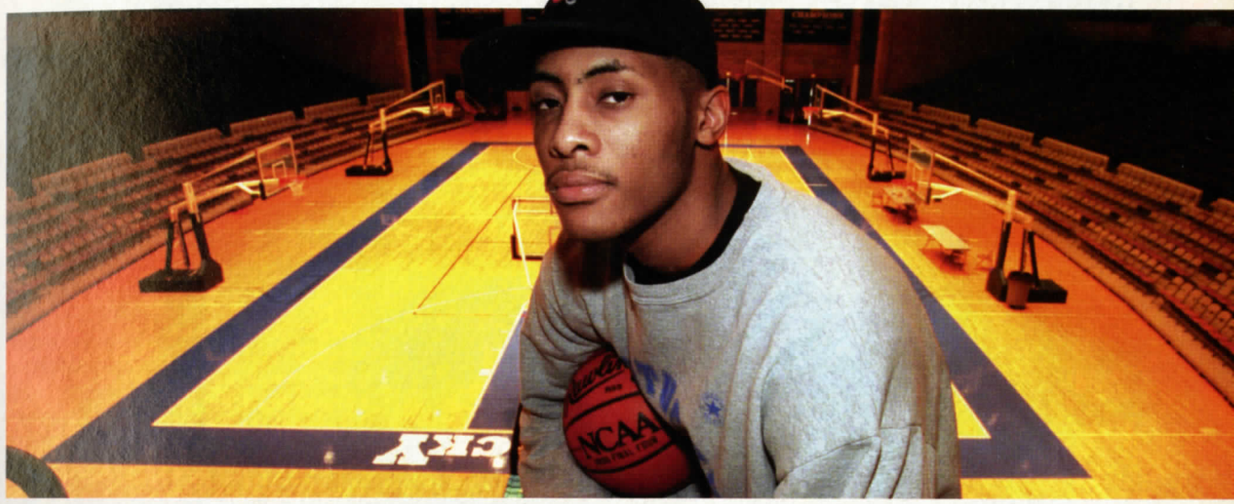
OHENEWA AKUFFO

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

After entering the sport of wrestling in grade nine, Ohenewa Akuffo became the youngest wrestler to win a Senior National Championship. She then went on to attend McMaster University, where she won numerous provincial and national titles. Currently, Akuffo, 29, is continuing with her professional development as a business student at York University while training in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

POWER IS...

"Power is the ability to control your own destiny. Knowing how to drive yourself into your destiny. To have a goal and to achieve it is power." – C.P.



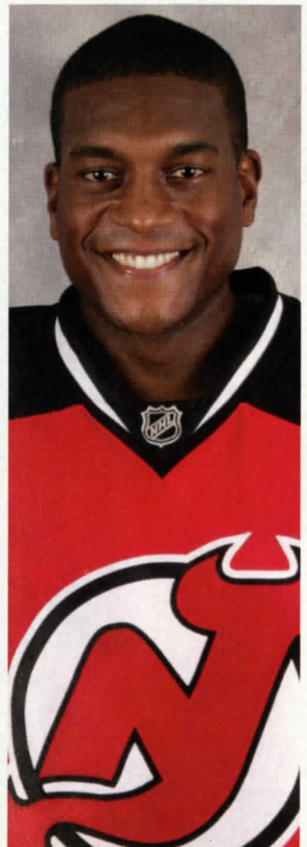
KEVIN WEEKES

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

At age six, Torontonian Kevin Weekes decided he was going to be an NHL goalie. Through perseverance, Weekes can now look back on 11 years of success in the league as the current goaltender of the New Jersey Devils. Always one to give back, Weekes has used his position to give back to his community through extensive involvement with charities.

POWER IS...

"Power is knowing yourself and loving yourself. Power is knowing where you come from, knowing where you're going, what it takes to get there and what it takes to stay there once you are there. All of those things are power." – C.P.



JAMAAL MAGLOIRE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

After making history at Toronto's famed Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute and finding great success with the Kentucky Wildcats, Jamaal Magloire overcame the odds and entered the NBA as a first-round draft pick. After eight years in the NBA, this former All-Star remains connected to Toronto through his Youth Deserve a Chance to Dream charity and his Ontario Basketball Association youth rep team, the JAMBA Cats. His recent move to the Dallas Mavericks is another big boost to the career of this NBA big man, who continues to dream of an NBA championship.

POWER IS...

"Power is being respected in your community and trying to educate and empower the people around you. I say that because being able to help others and being able to get respect from others is very important. Power is not always something physical. On the court, power is being able to make a difference for your team in a game.

One of my mentors was Simeon Mars because of the trials and tribulations that he has been through playing basketball. Knowing him as my coach at Eastern Commerce, as a coach at Kentucky and as a personal mentor, I respect his demeanor, his professionalism and the way he goes about his day-to-day operations — very calm, cool and collected." – C.P.

POWER BROKERS

MICHAEL "PINBALL" CLEMONS

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Everyone likes Michael "Pinball" Clemons. It's really hard not to. His engaging personality, coupled with his strong leadership skills and drive, has benefited him his whole career: both on the field as the CFL's all-time yardage leader, and on the sidelines with fans and players alike as Toronto's beloved Argos coach. While this year was certainly a power year for Clemons — he was named the president and CEO of the Toronto Argonauts franchise and inducted into the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame — it has been his commitment and passion to community issues and youth that has made his influence truly inspiring.

POWER IS...

"If you want to show me a truly great person, don't tell me about records or awards; don't tell me about money or power. If you want to show me a truly great person, show me what that person has done for someone else. Consistent with that, true power is what you do for other people. Within that concept, I have never felt powerless, even when I didn't have anything.

Now, in this position that is deemed a 'powerful' position, I understand that I am not powerful unless I use it for the benefit of other people. For me, the CEO position is a title, it's more important to have the disposition of power rather than the position of power.

A great leader is one who can actually engage people. To give orders is really just a dictator. Great leaders can do so without having a position.

For me, true authentic leadership oozes out of your pores. It's not something you pick up when you get to that position or that post; it's a part of your entire makeup — whether it's a husband, a dad, in the office, in the community, at the grocery store, wherever it is. True, genuine authentic leadership is real, and it manifests itself in every breath and step we take during the day." – S.S.

KEITH FORDE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

As a young child in Barbados, Keith Forde knew he wanted to be a police officer. Police, he says, were always well respected in the community. Now, as Toronto's first black deputy chief of police and highest-ranking black police officer in Toronto, Forde has been making his own community more than proud.

The recipient of the Harry Jerome Trailblazer Award, among many other honours, Forde is a tireless community worker who often lectures at schools about the importance of education and empowerment. Now, with two grown-up sons (pictured) who are also pursuing policing as a career, his high-profile position has made him responsible for the TPS Human Resources Command in which he oversees hiring and promotion, training and education and community mobilization, with an annual budget of more than $37 million.

POWER IS...

"Power alone scares me. I believe that power can be very dangerous when it's in the hands of the wrong person, with the wrong motives and the wrong agenda. On the other hand, when power is used constructively, the community and individual can benefit greatly. I use my power to inspire, uplift and encourage. People understand the power and the energy I bring to my job.

In my case, I can use power to help, position, mobilize and effect change, positive change. It can open doors. Because I am the deputy chief, people want to hear what I have to say, and I don't take that responsibility lightly. One of the things I have always tried to do as deputy chief of Toronto Police is keep bringing issues relevant to women and minorities to the table. That's how you use power to influence change." – S.S.

NICOLE JOLLY

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

As the vice-president of operations and marketing at FLOW 93.5, Nicole Jolly runs things. Whether it was launching the popular urban radio station or pushing for edgy marketing campaigns, Jolly's creativity has been integral to the success and growth of the station.

A former vice-president of Goldfarb Consultants, Jolly has a masters of science from the prestigious London School of Economics and once worked on the trading floor of the Paris Stock Exchange.

POWER IS...

"Power means so many different things to different people, and it's important for different reasons. Like anything else, it's temporary, especially when it's as a result of your profession; so, use it for good and be humble because situations are always changing." – A.L.

ARTISTS

AMANDA BRUGEL

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

For Canadian-born, Los Angeles-based Amanda Brugel, 2008 promises to be a breakthrough year. An actress with a diverse resumé, Brugel has a starring role in the upcoming Canadian series, Showcase's *Paradise Falls*.

Brugel is set to begin filming *Splice*, a sci-fi film starring Adrien Brody and Sarah Polley that is directed by Vincenzo Natali (*Cube*) and produced by Academy Award-nominee Guillermo del Toro. *Splice* tells the story of two young scientists who splice together human and animal DNA to create a new organism. Brugel will play Melinda Finch, a reporter assigned to cover the story. Let the breakthrough begin.

POWER IS...

"Power is knowing yourself and knowing what you are about. The understanding of self allows a person to grow and rise to the challenges of life. I came out of theatre school with the concept and idea that I was going to be a big star. In school, they build you up, and because I had been in an environment where they would cast blindly, I thought that was how the world would operate. Only after leaving did I realize I wouldn't be cast for roles like Ophelia — I was ignorant to the truth about the industry." – J.S.

For more on Amanda Brugel, check out our film section on page 76.

KARDINAL OFFISHALL

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Born Jason Harrow, rapper and T-dot ambassador Kardi will release the album *Not 4 Sale* on record label Konvict Muzik later in 2008, making him one of the few Canadian rappers to get love in the United States. Superstar Akon acts as executive producer, showcasing Kardi's well-known local talents to the world.

POWER IS...

"You, me, powerful/ We're fighting for this goal and we ain't gonna stop!" (*From the song "Powerfull!" (featuring Jully Black and Tara Chase.)* – J.S.

JULLY BLACK

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Jully Black has almost single handedly kept contemporary R&B alive in Canada. A Toronto-born singer and TV personality, her latest critically acclaimed release, *Revival*, has shot up the charts, continuing a string of artistic and personal success while firmly establishing Black as this country's queen of urban cool.

POWER IS...

"Power is trusting your inner voice. This is powerful to me because your intuition will never lie." – J.S.

KAREN BURKE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Karen Burke heads two of the most prominent gospel choirs in Canada: the world renowned Toronto Mass Choir and the 100-voice York University Gospel Choir. As an instructor at York, Burke continues the evolution of Canada's prestigious gospel tradition while inspiring students in the process.

POWER IS...

"Power is quiet. It's easy to be bouncing around and be the loudest in the room. I look for the person who observes — the one who investigates and looks deeply into things for a way to make an impact. You need to focus, observe and understand because in that way you have a better sense of understanding what people want." – J.S.

ADRIAN MCKENZIE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

As the co-publisher and founding creative director of *Urbanology* magazine, Adrian McKenzie refuses to let Canada sleep on hip-hop.

Five years ago, McKenzie, 27, was a student at Seneca at York for digital media arts, where he says he used to make mock covers and read magazines like *Word, XXL* and *The Source,* and wonder when Canada would start promoting its own local hip-hop talent.

After teaming up with editor Priya Ramanujam, he started *Urbanology*, an urban lifestyle and entertainment magazine with a focus on music and promoting Toronto artists and youth initiatives. Started literally with money saved from friends and family, the magazine has gone from an original circulation of 6,000 in Toronto to selling almost 25,000 issues Canada-wide, with distribution in the United States.

Even more impressive has been the community initiatives, with McKenzie often speaking at schools to youth interested in publishing.

POWER IS...

"I do see myself as a powerful figure within my community and with people who are exposed to me. I just like helping people. Everyone knows they can come up to me and ask me for help, whether it's kids asking me how to design their own magazine or an artist asking me for tips on the industry.

I always tell youth that you don't have to be a rapper; you don't have to be a dancer to be a success or even to be involved in the music industry. You can go into publishing, writing, design or into other areas. You just have to have the passion." – S.S.

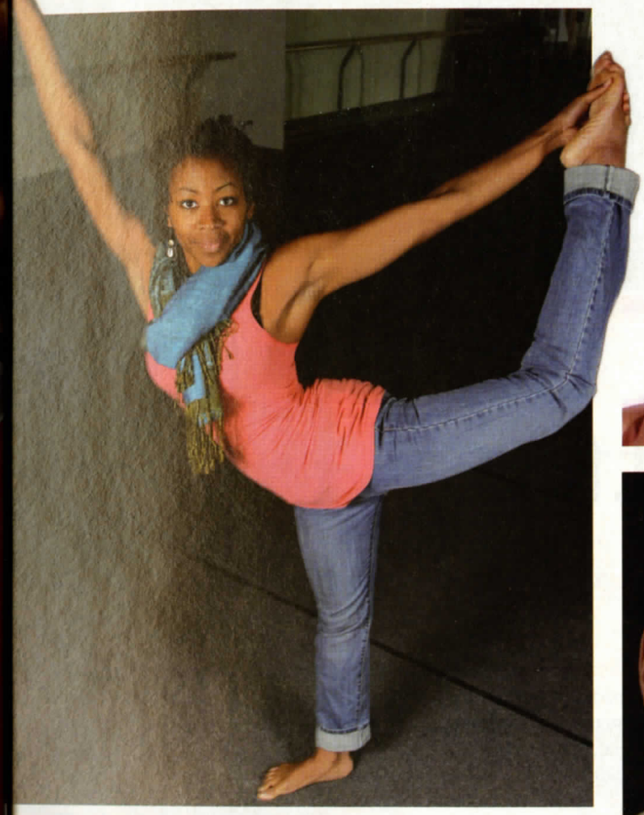
PATRICIA JAGGERNAUTH

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Patricia Jaggernauth, or Patricia J, is a very busy young woman. At only 25, the journalism graduate is the host of an Internet show, *BITE TV,* an Emmy-winning Canadian digital interactive channel.

POWER IS...

I consider myself to be very powerful. I love surrounding myself with people who have drive. I am putting myself out there as an ethnic woman, putting my face on the map and letting the world know that it's possible." – C.P.



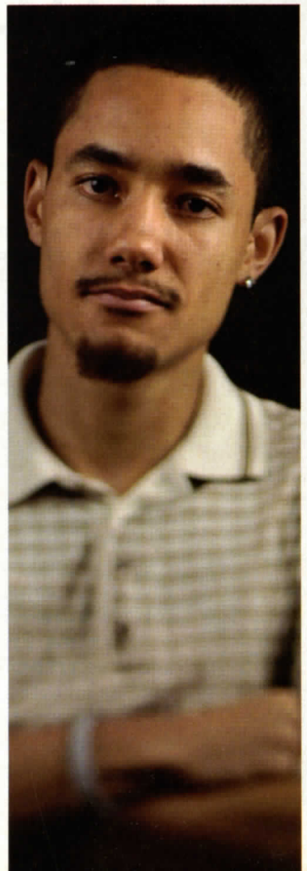
JASMYN FYFFE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Fresh out of university, Jasmyn Fyffe, 24, is already moving. A rising dancer and choreographer, Fyffe has refused the lure of leaving Toronto for New York. Proud of her Canadian roots, she has created her own dance class (Caribbean Soul), is the founding member of Kingdom Movement Dance and was recently cast as a dancer in *Umoja: Spirit of Togetherness*.

POWER IS...

"Being powerful in my performances. Art itself is very powerful as you have the ability to impact others with your art. One thing that makes me powerful is challenging myself. As a dancer and choreographer creating new work, you develop a sense of individuality and confidence that can, in turn, make you feel powerful." – C.P.



KOFI HOPE

POWERFUL BECAUSE...

Kofi Hope has always used his voice to speak out. Last year the UofT student was founder of the Black Youth Coalition Against Violence, impressing many with his passionate battle against gun violence. After winning a Rhodes scholarship, Hope is currently studying African studies at Oxford University.

POWER IS...

"I'm not really interested in personal power; I'm interested in strength. Strength to stand up for what's right, strength to stay true to my values, strength to speak the truth when no one wants to hear it and finally strength to resist the way power is abused in our society." – C.P.

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All that glitters

Entrepreneur Jackie Halstead perfects her craft

BY: J.R. Dash

FOR JEWELLERY DESIGNER Jackie Halstead, the road to professional achievement has been paved with unbounded passion and desire, resulting in the creation of the Jackie Samantha jewellery line, soon to be launched at local retailers.

Halstead began her craft in 1992 during a three-month internship at a small jewellery boutique through the former Jobs Ontario Youth Program. She recently rekindled her passion in the summer of 2007.

"My creations immediately gained the admiration and respect of my colleagues, employers and clients. I'd discovered a new talent," says Halstead.

"Since my first designs 15 years ago, I've grown more as a woman than as an artist. Not too much has changed in my designs. So my ability to reach the next level artistically will depend on the techniques I learn and the creative people and cultures I'm exposed to. Jewellery should evoke something about your personality, your self expression and style."

In order to move to the next level, Halstead connects with other creative minds.

"Once you've learned the foundation of a skill, you can make it yours. One day, I see myself becoming a great artist like Yves Saint Laurent."

To strengthen her business skills, Halstead has applied for a Toronto Business Development Centre program grant, which she will use to develop a business plan and gain the experience of a mentor. But having a meticulous strategy is not enough for Halstead. To ensure her future as a successful big-name designer, she knows it's her passion and work ethic that's going to get her there.

"For me, it's not about making money; I see it as a calling, not a day job." ■

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MONEY

Top dollar

Financial planner charts road map to clients' success

BY: J.R. Dash

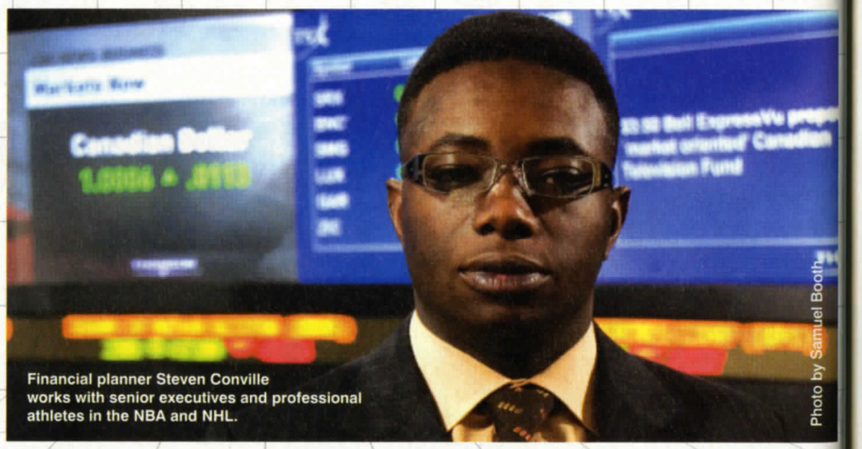
PARTNERSHIP, NOT PROCESS, is what has elevated the success of Steven Conville's relationship with his clients. The certified financial planner says that "making it personal" helps clients recognize the need to have a key understanding of their investments, and how they're being managed.

Conville has always been an advocate for the financial assets of others as the vice-president and associate portfolio manager of Blackmont Capital, the largest independent wealth management firm in Canada.

With his position, Conville develops personalized financial road maps for his clients, a practice he refers to as "bulletproofing their lives." He focuses on the individual goals of his clients, reaching above and beyond what they may expect.

In fact, Conville says he often assumes the role of a lifestyle advisor, taking the time to learn about their financial and personal goals, as well as their life preferences and challenges. His clients include everyone from senior Canadian executives and players from the NHL and NBA.

Prior to working with Blackmont Capital, Conville served as vice-president and branch manager with another major Canadian investment firm where he oversaw assets in excess of $750 million. This year will be his 16th year in the financial services industry, the last nine years managing assets for clients.



Financial planner Steven Conville works with senior executives and professional athletes in the NBA and NHL.

Photo by Samuel Booth

The road to financial success comes from a lot of hard work and planning, something Conville says he was never afraid to do.

"There is no substitution for hard work," the Toronto native says. "It makes me who I am." It's a work ethic that follows directly from his Jamaican parents; his mother a nurse and father a teacher, both retired and active volunteers.

While Conville has completed a variety of degrees to obtain his current position — including an MBA in finance, a post-graduate diploma in investment management and a fellowship from the Canadian Securities Institute — he says his experiences communicating with others has made the difference.

"My bachelor of education degree is most useful when working with clients. I can explain the technical and financial information in terms relevant to them," he says.

Conville says that being an effective communicator helps to avoid putting clients in a situation where they feel they haven't received pertinent information to help them make informed decisions. He argues that financial information is frequently not adequately explained, but investors don't always understand and may be too proud to admit it.

A recent report in the *Toronto Star* cites an NBA Players' Association representative addressing the Toronto Raptors on financial prudence. They told the players a statistic that "60 per cent of retired NBA players go broke five years after their NBA paycheques stop arriving."

> 60 per cent of retired NBA players go broke five years after their NBA paycheques stop arriving

Conville calls such situations a "travesty" that shouldn't be happening.

"Professional athletes need good financial advice and people in their lives who genuinely care about bringing stability to their financial wealth," he says.

Conville says that most clients basically accept his advice. However, his financial straight talk is also what makes many people opt out of being one of his clients.

"I will not always tell you what you want to hear, particularly if it will be damaging to you in the future," he says.

A consummate educator whose profession puts him in the company of many wealthy people, Conville says that most wealthy people have experienced a major financial loss at some point in their life.

"This has been a good lesson for me because they still persevere. They don't let setbacks stop them from continuing to succeed, no matter what the situation."

Conville's interest in investing has carried over into his volunteer work. As a member of the Urban Financial Services Coalition, he provides financial education, mentoring, advice and access to underprivileged children.

"The experience gives youth the opportunity to see that there are options," he says. The financial guru is also in demand as a guest speaker for numerous colleges and universities, as well as corporations where he addresses executives.

If Conville can offer any advice for those looking to get out of debt or expand their financial portfolio, it's this: "Pattern yourself on the actions of the wealthy. They work with investment professionals and you should too.

"Even if you don't have a lot of money to invest, it's never too late to start. Financial advice is as close as your local bank. Speak with someone who is good and knowledgeable.

"The best CEOs, teachers or leaders are all the best because they sought advice."

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At home with Karen King

BY: Terese Sears
PHOTOGRAPHY: Michael Chambers
MAKEUP: Roxanne DeNobrega

WHEN SHE WALKED into her Scarborough house six years ago, Karen King knew she was going to need to use her imagination. The country paneling, fake wooden beams and hideous wallpaper felt right at home in Nashville's Grand Ole Opry.

Luckily, King could see beyond the superficial.

The place resonated on a deeper level, says the production executive for drama content at Canwest Mediaworks. There were spacious rooms, a child-friendly layout and the two-storey house had a nice location on a quiet suburban street.

So King and her husband, award-winning journalist Okey Chigbo, put in an offer and soon began transforming the place with her two sons, Chiemeka, 12, and Chikezie, 16.

Now, their richly decorated, art-filled home is a reflection of their family: Afrocentric, vibrant and welcoming.

"For me, it's about being cosy," says King. "Some people feel that it's cluttered, but I feel like it's enveloping."

Karen King is now, arguably, the most powerful person of African descent in Canadian television. She develops and supervises the production of national drama programming and comedy series, including the hit Caribbean sitcom, *Da Kink In My Hair*. She has produced more than a dozen films that tie into Canada's cultural and racial diversity, including *Rude*, directed by Clement Virgo. The movie had its premier at the Cannes Film Festival, and King became the first black woman to produce a theatrically-released dramatic feature film in Canada. She is also the only producer to have won two prestigious Gemini Awards.

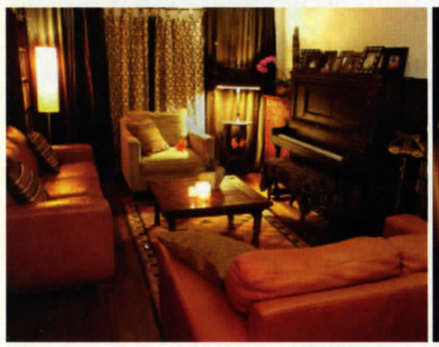
With those accolades, one would think King would be more boastful.

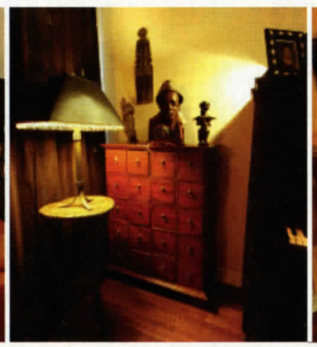
"I don't feel that powerful," King responds with a laugh.

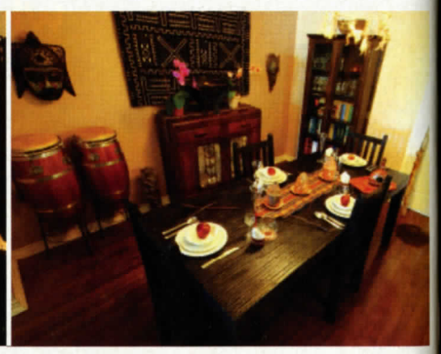
Still, like most working women, King leads a dual existence. Her other life begins and ends with her home. In her eclectic space, she is surrounded by the vast collection of statuary, vessels, busts, masks and African textiles collected by her and Chigbo during the last 30 years.

"We're at home with all the faces of the ancestors looking at us," she says.

King's keen eye for interior design has served her well in furnishing her home. Many interesting pieces have been bought from production sales during her day job.







"You pick up all kinds of fabulous pieces for next to nothing, like this table, teak cabinet, lamps," she says.

But more than the material things in the home, it's the people who surround her which are of the greatest importance and provide her with the most joy.

"The thing is, my kids are the things that I've been searching for all of my life; they give me all that in a way that's way more rewarding than being on the stage at Cannes or picking up a Gemini or any of the awards that I've ever received," she says.

"Those kids, family unit and love, that's what it's really all about." ■

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JOHN CHAMBERS

For John Chambers, Broker, Royal LePage Kingsbury, real estate was a natural choice, although he did not know it at the time.

"My father was a real estate agent in the early '70s and I used to go to clients' homes with him (anything to sway the minds and hearts of a seller or buyer) on a regular basis. It was in my early '20s while in my second year of college, that my father insisted that I get my real estate license; I did it to appease him, but almost 20 years later, I am still in the business."

John came into real estate in the 1990s, just when the market was on a down turn, but he rode the down times, always wondering if he had made the right choice. It wasn't always easy, but real estate has been good to John; it allowed him the flexibility to do other things such as starting his own company and being able to spend time with his family, including his two daughters.

"Real Estate is a funny business because, it's unconventional. When you are sitting at home around a family dinner table that is when realtors are on the road, going to showings, getting that crucial listing, hanging a sign or something. I remember being one of two or three cars on the 407 during a severe blizzard, and getting home well after 1 am. But then, there are the days that I don't have to jump out of bed at 7 am and fight the 401 traffic to get to the office. I guess that's a pretty good trade off. But in all seriousness, real estate can be fun, but it really has become a cut throat business, which is, in my mind, the dirty side of a beautiful career. Nevertheless, it is my life and I love it. "

After more than 14 years in the Sutton Group organization, John recently joined the Royal LePage franchise, a move he sees as strategic and life-changing. A new brokerage, a new farm area, and a new outlook. John has dedicated his adult life to being an honest and caring real estate broker.

John Chambers

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Spice it up

Ethiopian cuisine is heating up Toronto's dining scene

BY: Glynnis Mapp

EAST AFRICAN CHEFS across the city are becoming a hot commodity to Toronto's prized multicultural bevy of restaurateurs.

From west-end watering holes (there are a slew of great spots on the Ossington Avenue strip) to a number of downtown gems, Ethiopian chefs and their share-plate style of dining are getting noticed.

Having opened her spot more than a year ago, Zeni Ashine, owner of Parkdale's M&B Yummy Restaurant, may be a new kid on the block, but she has already acquired quite a roster of regulars and has found a way to survive amongst the hundreds of new restaurants.

Their cuisine is not the only thing getting urbanites to chow down; their ability to adapt to their changing customers is also a draw. Ethiopian chefs are shifting and shaping their menus to appeal to Toronto foodies, and arguably some of the countries most discriminating palates.

Come summer 2008, Ashine will be offering all-vegan fare. Yes, vegan.

Traditionally, Ethiopian fare is packed with slow-cooked meats like chicken and beef, cottage cheeses on the side for ample dipping and lots of other vegan no-nos, but Ashine and her from-scratch menu has vegan customers salivating. Her affordable prices — $8 to $10 for platter-sized entrees; $15 for really large dinners and $1 for fried dumplings and brick-sized spring rolls — also help to rack up points with her health-conscious neighbours who want a change from always making their own dinners with pricey organics.

It's all because of a little ingredient called teff.

The crepe-style sourdough flat bread she offers — the bed for mounds of bold flavoured vegan-approved wats like slow-cooked pureed chick peas, red lentils and collard greens — has also evidently become all the rage for west-enders. She also replaced traditional seasoned stewed meats (called tebs) with a surprisingly sumptuous "vegetarian chicken" made out of soy flour.

"Most of my customers are vegan and many people are allergic or just want to be healthy," Ashine says. "I even noticed that once I cooked more vegan food, I also started to lose weight, and I was happy," she laughs.

And so are her customers.

It's really not hard to warm up to Ashine, her cuisine and homey hospitality. She floats daintily around customer tables with a bright smile and inquires sweetly to first-timers and regulars alike: "You like it?"

Almost everyone does.

Satisfied, but muffled responses follow, customers approve through big mouthfuls, messy fingers give hearty thumbs up.

"Good. Eat, eat," she encourages, beaming.

Adding to the ceremonious comfort is her Ethiopian coffee ($10 for six people) — a real treat. | Continued on p. 60 ▸

Zeni Ashine, owner of Parkdale's M&B Yummy Restaurant, serves up a feast. (Located at 1263 Queen W.)

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▸ Continued from p. 58

Ashine takes green-coloured beans and roasts them in a small pot that she brings to the table and shakes for customers to see. Wafting the browning beans over, she also brings an incense burner with intensely fragrant frankincense rocks and a giant serving of sugar-sweetened popcorn to munch on.

Ashine also attributes her success to that authentic yeasty teff grain bread, injera.

In fact, it's the only thing she says she doesn't make herself. Not to say that she hasn't tried. Many Ethiopian chefs don't make their injera in-house. Chefs say the temperamental teff and barley grains make it difficult to create: the injera is usually cooked with a close eye and an exacting recipe on non-stick ceramic cookware.

Owner Mohammed Haddis of the Ethiopian House restaurant brings food to the table on a covered platter.

Instead, Ashine buys it from a local Ethiopian health food grocer at $3.75 per package of five teff injeras, a steep price she says she's willing to pay if her customers are happy.

But she's not the only one.

"It's so tricky to make it, but it's the most important part of the meal," says Mohammed Haddis, operator and main chef of the popular African restaurant Ethiopian House (located at 4 Irwin Ave). "Sometimes, it's the mood of the chef, maybe sometimes even the mood of the teff for you to get the recipe just right," he says jokingly.

He has also struggled to make the tricky flat bread to appease his regulars at the Wellesley and Yonge Street resto, but just couldn't get the recipe right. He also buys it from a local Ethiopian grocer, who has managed to get a hold of imported wheat and barley injeras without the teff for less of a sourdough taste.

"Most people associate sourness with spoiling, even though that's the traditional taste," Haddis says. "So, we use the more neutral ingredients instead. We also cut down the spice a little bit. Some people find it overpowering."

And it's what his customers prefer.

A healthy menu and great prices keep them coming back for more — veggie and meat dinner entrees are about $10 to $12; lunches are about $8 — but not without adjusting their menu to suit to the tastes of sensitive customers.

"We listen to what our customers want and change the recipes to suit them, but we try to keep it as authentic as possible too. If they want something extra, we'll bring it for them. If they don't like it, we'll change it," says Haddis.

Ethiopia House has been lauded for years since opening in 1999, and has been attracting general downtowners and students who like the communal aspect to eating Ethiopian-style. It's also blocks away from the University of Toronto and Ryerson University, and perfect for feasters who want an international nook to call their very own.

What customers also love, Haddis says, is the ambiance — art and traditional Ethiopian knick-knacks and wall coverings that shout out to patrons in beautiful, bright rainbow colours. The aroma of roasted coffee beans and frankincense waft through the two-storey restaurant. A great after-meal delight, customers love the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony ($12 for six people).

"People are very comfortable. They come with their friends; it's a place where they can relax," Haddis says.

"I feel like I'm bringing a little piece of Ethiopia to people here." ■

African restaurants across the city:

ADDIS ABABA RESTAURANT
1184 Queen St. W.
416-538-0059

QUEEN OF SHEBA
1198 Bloor St. W. (near Dufferin Rd.)
416-536-4162

LALIBELA
869 Bloor St. W.
416-535-6615

MANYATA/ SPICE ROOM & CHUTNEY BAR
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___By The Way Cafe
___China Village
___Cibo Cucina
___Cluck Grunt & Low
___Fresh
___Future Bakery
___Ginger
___Grapefruit Moon
___House of Sushi
___Indian Rice Factory
___Insomnia
___La Bamba
___Live
___Momo's
___Rocco's Italian
___The Pour House

2
Some of my favourite restaurants not listed above are:

_____
_____

3
What is most important to me from 1(highest) to 5 (lowest).

___Cleanliness
___Decor
___Discount promos
___Food quality
___Friendly service
___Local ingredients
___Organic ingredients
___Prompt service
___Value for money

4
I am __ female __ male

___ 18 - 25
___ 25 - 39
___ 40 - 49
___ 50 - 59
___ over 60

5
To choose a local restaurant, I use

___ A newspaper
___ A magazine
___ The internet

6
I dine out in the Annex area

___ Once a year
___ Once a month
___ More than once a month

7
___ I live in the Annex area
___ I work in the Annex area

8
My office orders catering for business lunches

___ Once a month
___ More than once a month

9
I try to eat organic foods

___ Never
___ When available
___ Always

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MUSIC

GLOBAL BEATS

Toronto is one of the most diverse cities in the world, but are we still supporting a diverse range of music? BY: Lenny Stoute

LIVING IN MULTICULTURAL

T-dot, you might figure that world music is the soundtrack of our lives. But you would be wrong, and a quick go-round with local radio and TV channels would rid you of that misconception.

However, that was not always the case. From the early to mid-'90s, world music was riding a high wave in Toronto. Reggae and African music were dominant, but the sounds of Brazil and Latin America were being heard and bhangra was bringing hybrid South Asian music into play.

Lizzy Mahashe was part of that first wave of African performers. Working with Pan-African unit Siyaka, Mahashe brought the sound of Joburg's shebeens to Toronto's dancing feet, and they were the better for it. Currently at work on a new album titled *Celebrate*, she's the grand dame of African music.

"I feel African music is getting less attention than 20 years ago," says Mahashe. "It doesn't help that we all had such hopes for [radio station] Flow 93.5. That it would follow through and play African music, but all they have is one African show, and the majority of what they play is R&B and hip-hop.

"Nothing against that [music], but they get lots of other exposure. We were given to believe 93.5 would promote world music. That hasn't happened. Apart from the college stations, there's no support, and unfortunately, no club has come up to replace the Bamboo as a central base for world music.

"There's a reasonable flow of international acts coming in and world music events at Harbourfront and AfroFest are certainly well-promoted, but not that many local acts benefit from those."

African music has retreated to the burbs, says Mahashe, to intimate events like weddings and other celebrations where they'll hire a couple of local acts. She decries the fact that no local promoters have come up from the community to create a venue, without which, she says, the scene will continue to stagnate.

Juno-nominated Humble is at the head of the newest wave of reggae artists. He shares a global background with many Toronto world music artists. Born in the United Kingdom to Jamaican parents, he moved back to Jamaica and lived in St. Elizabeth before coming to Toronto. He has been making music in Toronto for five years, but he can still see the scene through a newcomer's eyes. Humble

Local Cuban artist Amanda Martinez says Canada needs to start marketing its international artists

maintains a significant presence in Jamaica, where he'll be completing his sophomore album due this spring.

"The reggae market in Toronto is growing, but not as quickly as I would like it," says Humble. "This is unfortunate as it's causing a lot of reggae talent to have to move to other places in order to make it. What I see taking their place is a lot of second-generation players of Jamaican parentage getting into the scene. In terms of how we're seen in Jamaica, I think the Toronto scene is getting more talked about and getting a little more respect. On the island, they know about Toronto musicians like Steel, Blessed and myself.

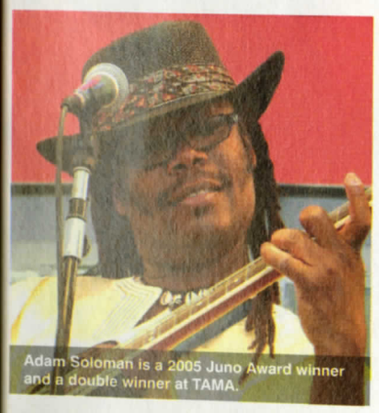
"Once you get approval in Jamaica, then you're really on the road. My path will be to really establish myself in Jamaica, maybe live there again for a while, and then return to build on my Jamaican reputation. It's easier to get to the next level if you're part of the scene on the island."

Amanda Martinez could be the poster girl for Canadian world music. Born in Toronto to Mexican and South African parents, she studied in Mexico City and was exposed to a myriad Latin American styles. She returned to Toronto and tapped the local Cuban musical community for backing on her debut album *Sola*. This was doable because of the large pool of Cuban musicians in town, a feature found in few North American cities.

"Toronto is a good world music town because people here really celebrate each other's culture," says Martinez. "Something unique and inclusive develops here because everyone's open to different styles, and there's such a wide variety of culture to experience.

"Unfortunately, Canada's rep as a market and incubator of world music isn't so strong," says Martinez. "I attended a major conference in Spain last year, and I'll just say Canada was woefully underrepresented by the government people responsible for that. This is nothing new; the actual marketing of world music from one of its richest sources has always been problematic."

Martinez believes the solution is for the music to be promoted globally via video and concert DVD exposure, and as a platform for funding for a travelling caravan of Toronto world music performers showcasing at festival events around the world.



Adam Soloman is a 2005 Juno Award winner and a double winner at TAMA.

Juno nominated Humble, born Simon Jonathan Vassell, is at the head of the newest wave of reggae artists.

Like Mahashe, Adam Solomon was part of the first wave of African musicians to settle in Toronto. Originally a member of the Afronubians, the guitar virtuoso went off to form Tikisa, one of Canada's best-known and loved African acts, which tours regularly across the country. Solomon is an icon of the African music scene and remains one of its most successful artists.

This most courtly native of Kenya put aside his deep concern for family caught in the conflict there to offer his take.

"Not so many African musicians are coming here to [Toronto] now, partly because of changes in the immigration policies. There are pockets like Lula Lounge, but it's a shrinking scene. I think it will stay like that until a world music club opens downtown.

"Also, the club scene in most African countries is vibrant in a way people here can't believe. Any decent musician can make a living in his country, sometime even without leaving his city. Maybe the word has spread and the African music scene in Canada doesn't look so attractive. Also, you can't ignore the impact of hip-hop on the youth of every culture."

Solomon notes even name acts like himself and Madagascar Slim couldn't make it without playing outside Toronto as much as possible.

"Lots of people tell me I could do much better if I moved to the U.S., but this is my country and I want to make a mark here." ■

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GIVE IT UP

Singer Zaki Ibrahim is making a name for herself with her soulfully eclectic mélange of R&B, hip-hop and jazz

BY: Del Cowie

It's a cold and rainy night in Toronto but that hasn't stopped a near-capacity crowd from gathering at the Mod Club to see much buzzed-about vocalist Zaki Ibrahim perform. Midway through her rapturously received set, Ibrahim stops the proceedings to blow bubbles with her band members and welcome two teenaged girls to the stage.

The duo is a group named Wee Golden and the teenage band sings folk songs and plays the thumb piano (known as the kalimba). Ibrahim cedes the spotlight to their warmly received performance before she triumphantly resumes her headlining set. It's an intriguing move, since taking a backseat mid-set isn't exactly what many would expect of a vocalist whose profile is growing exponentially.

A few days after the show, the Toronto-based vocalist talks about the Wee Golden set in the middle of her show.

"A lot of people were saying it really didn't fit, but that was kinda the point," Ibrahim says. And the bubbles? "It was just to make the environment comfortable for the two 14- and 15-year-old girls…. They were nervous as hell.

"They just write beautiful songs, and it was just an opportunity to let them experience something like that. It was like two little golden angels with golden songs — and with bubbles."

Ibrahim's fiercely protective concern for the group is by no means an accident. Her selfless attitude of putting others before herself is an attitude that is applicable to many things in her life and is deeply reflected in her own music.

If you happened to have gotten a chance to hear Ibrahim's 2006 EP *Sho (Iqra in Orange)*, which has been mainly available through her live shows over the past couple of years, the singer's generous attitude wouldn't be totally surprising to you.

> "Her selfless attitude of putting others before herself is an attitude that is applicable to many things in her life and is deeply reflected in her own music"

Behind Ibrahim's soulfully eclectic mélange of R&B, hip-hop and jazz is her impressive lyrical stance exhibiting a deep concern for others, establishing itself as a theme on tracks like the reggae-tinged "Connected Mattalike" and the gritty catchiness of "Grow." While a cynic might scoff at the optimism and hope evident on the undeniable head-nodder "Daylight" as being naïve, it's extremely hard to dismiss Ibrahim's voice, infused with impassioned verve. She credits her parents with her disarmingly positive outlook.

"They raised my brothers and sisters to be a little bit more conscious of what goes on around you and to try to put yourself in someone else's shoes," Ibrahim says.

Her father is Zane Ibrahim, a renowned percussionist and long-time anti-apartheid activist in South Africa, who helped to found one of the country's first community radio stations. Though she was born in Vancouver, Ibrahim spent much of her youth in South Africa. She is "fascinated" by the country and has often returned there for extended periods of time. While there, she has helped to organize self-expression workshops for young offenders in South African prisons, some who she humorously remembers mistook her for American R&B artist Alicia Keys.

Ibrahim says crowds can be tough to musical performers in Cape Town, but her toughest critics when she first began to dabble in music as a child was her own family.

"I always got heckled by them," Ibrahim says. "And it didn't matter what I was doing, I'd be telling a story like, 'We need to bring justice to a situation,' and everyone would be laughing and I'd be crying because I'd be like 'It's about a duck that died because of pollution,'" she recalls laughing. "And it would be a funny experience for them. And I would be like, 'Ah! How am I gonna let them know the truth?'"

Those early experiences have clearly made her very resilient. Recalling being booed by a rowdy crowd at the famed New York Apollo Theater a couple of years ago for performing Sade's "Sweetest Taboo" over Snoop Dogg's "Drop It Like It's Hot" instrumental, Ibrahim giggles constantly and calls it "a really, really amazing positive memory." She's clearly ready to take on what the music industry might throw at her.

Having recently signed a deal with the Red Ink/SonyBMG label in Canada, Ibrahim is preparing the release of her second EP. *Sho (Iqra in Orange)*, her first EP, dealt with love, nurturing and sensuality in relation to the word *iqra*, which means to constantly seek knowledge in Arabic. However, Ibrahim says her second EP, *Eclectica in Purple*, due out in May, will deal with "more heartbreak" and will be more outspoken and delve into Afrobeat.

Later in the year, Ibrahim will also release her full-length debut entitled *Every Opposite*. It will incorporate Ibrahim's already established organically soulful sound, with nods to electronic sounds from the '80s and hip-hop beats, and be a mesh of intentionally different sounds and messages to reflect the album's title. Ibrahim hopes to bring the album to life with a play using the resources of the District Six Collective who work with her on all her projects.

The collective is actually named after District Six, a racially integrated area of Cape Town that thrived for years during the apartheid regime until the government declared it a "whites only" area in 1966 and razed it to the ground in 1970. Ibrahim actually had family members that lived in District Six.

District Six, the Toronto-based record label and management company, was founded by Dave Guenette after his travels through South Africa. And while Ibrahim may be one of the most visible affiliate of the collective, she has used her profile to provide opportunities to the other artists who range from DJs to filmmakers to also have their voices heard in accordance with the collective's modus operandi.

It's just another example of Ibrahim's penchant for deflecting attention away from herself, even as the spotlight and the buzz around her as a recording artist continues to grow.

It's not surprising that when she talks about how she would define success and her future, it doesn't take her long to, yet again, talk about the welfare of others.

"I think the definition of success for me is to be somewhat effective in putting my music across, and if it's not music, it's being able to express myself in some way," Ibrahim says.

"Living a normal life, just having my health … travel and that kind of stuff. Those are the golden thoughts y'know," she says. "I'd like to be a stand-up person and feel successful, to be a healthy person, so I can be like healthy for others. I'm not trying to be clichéd about it, but honestly that spells success." ■

Q&A
with Kim Davis

BY: Melissa Bessey

KIM DAVIS HAS always been inspired by the power of sound. So it's no surprise that this Torontonian has made the right moves toward gaining international acclaim. At 24, this South African-born, Canadian-raised singer can now boast a number of radio hits ("Hush" feat. Sizzla and "Sometimes") and a growing legion of fans.

With the ability to tell a story through music and captivate listeners with candid lyrics, Davis has never been one to shy away from facing the challenges of life head on.

After witnessing the murder of her husband, whom she was married to at the early age of 19, Kim knew it was time for a change. Since then, she has been working hard; her song "Hush" became the first smash record to hit radio airwaves in Canada, the US, and the UK.

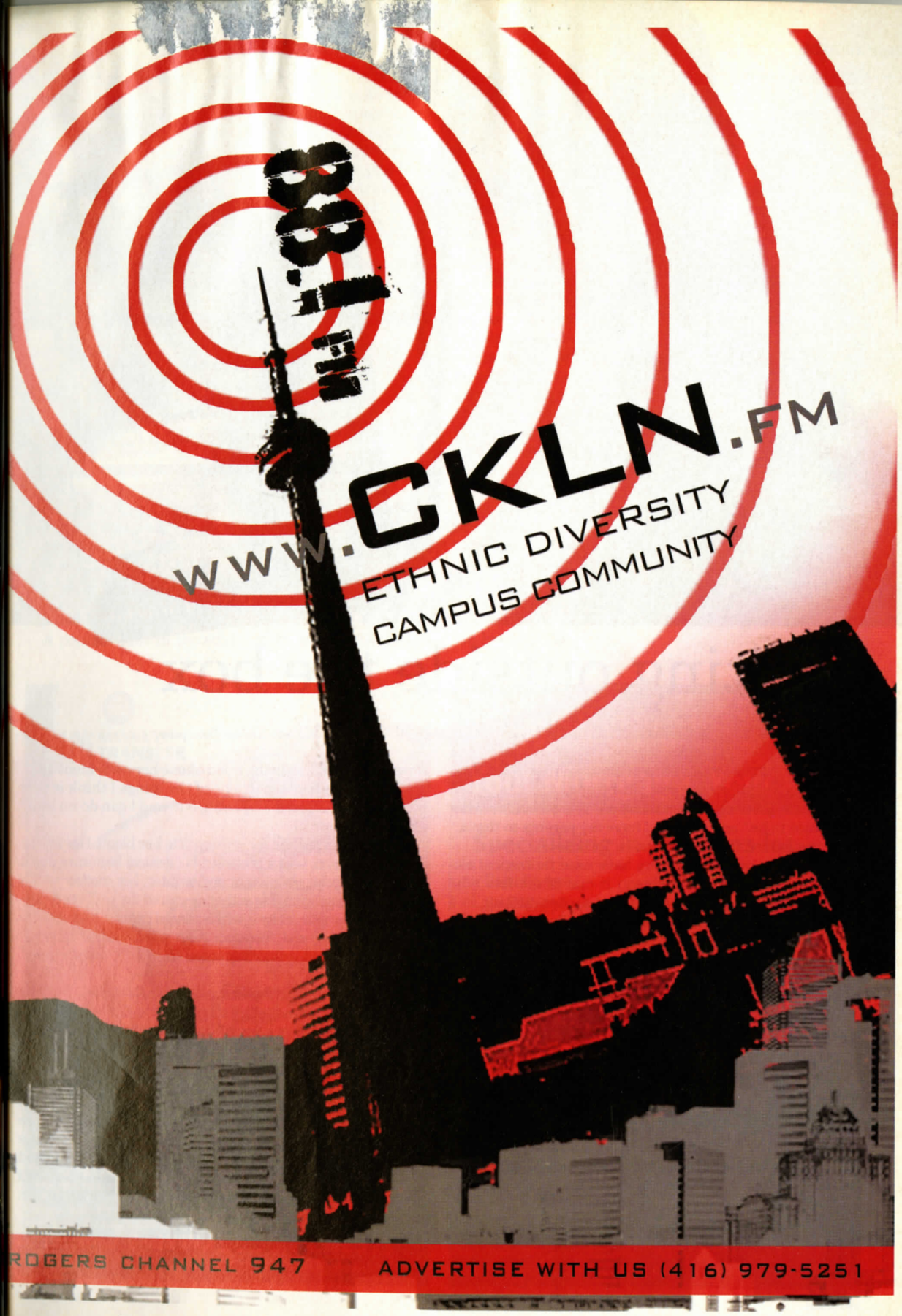
Sway chatted with this rising songstress about life, music and "staying on your grind."

Sway: Who are your greatest musical inspirations?
Davis: My dad, who is a musician and writer, has always been at the top of my list. I come from a musical family, so I listen to a lot of different types of music that inspire me. I love all the greats — Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Alicia Keys, Keisha Cole and even folk performer Jim Croce. I have also definitely been inspired by other Canadian female vocalists like Deborah Cox and Tamia.

S: What do you enjoy most about collaborating with other artists?
D: I really enjoy working with other creative souls because everyone has a different perspective. Seeing things from someone else's point of view takes me out of my element, which challenges me and allows me to grow.

S: What has been the greatest struggle to overcome as a young mother?
D: Initially, my greatest struggle was trying to find a balance. It was tricky in terms of scheduling, to make sure that the kids feel like they are the priority because they are. When I began my career, I did music only when it was convenient. I was a background performer for other artists, which allowed me to be in the industry without the stress of the spotlight. Now, I rely on my mama and the support of my family to maintain a normal life and schedule for my children.

S: What advice would you offer to other young women trying to make it in the Canadian music industry?
D: Persistence is the key. It's all about realizing your dream, whatever that may be. Know who you are and what it is you want to say. Know your message. Stay motivated, keep it real and be on your grind! ■



Writing outside the box

Author Nalo Hopkinson shares her extraordinary mind

BY: Andrea Thompson

WHEN SPEAKING WITH award-winning writer Nalo Hopkinson, expectations are best left behind.

"I didn't grow up with a sense of, 'You cannot be what you want to be,' and for that I have my parents to thank," says the author from her home in Toronto.

Though many black writers have used fantastical elements in their work, Hopkinson is one of the few who identifies herself as a science-fiction writer. Writing in a genre traditionally dominated by a white, Eurocentric male perspective, she has received critical acclaim for novels that draw on the richness of Caribbean and African culture to push past the margins of everyday experience and take us into a world where imagination reigns.

"The thing about science fiction as a literature is that it doesn't come out of our communities," Hopkinson says. "If someone who doesn't know anything about science fiction thinks about science fiction, they think about aliens and spaceships, and white people going to where the aliens live and colonizing them. We've been there. We've been on the other side of that. It's not something that people feel they can insert themselves into. And yet, there are a lot of black readers of science fiction and fantasy, many of whom are longing to see themselves reflected in the literature they love."

Hopkinson has done just that, creating characters of African descent who speak with the lilt of their native tongue and deal with real life issues. As a queer, black, female writer, Hopkinson sees the importance of portraying diversity as well as being open about her own identity.

"When I get frightened, one of the things I think is that other people helped me by being out, and I can do no less," she says.

Hopkinson's passion for writing is in her blood. Her father, Slade Hopkinson, was a professor of classical literature and a well-known poet, playwright and painter; her mother was a librarian. Growing up, the author devoured the well-read classics on her parents' shelves, which ranged from Shakespeare to Homer's *Odyssey* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

"I didn't know it was supposed to be too hard for me," she laughs.

Born in Jamaica, Hopkinson lived in Trinidad, Guyana and the United States before she moved to Canada with her parents at 16. Almost a decade later, she decided to pick up the pen. The power of Hopkinson's imagination first shook the international science-fiction and fantasy community with her award-winning novel, *Brown Girl in the Ring*. Set in a futuristic Toronto where spirits mingle with urban chaos, this hauntingly original debut was followed by three more novels, *Midnight Robber*, *The Salt Roads* and the recent *The New Moon's Arms*. Hopkinson also published a collection of short stories, and has edited and co-edited a handful of anthologies, creating a body of work that has established her as a force of nature in the genre.

For Hopkinson, writing science fiction is a form of activism.

"Fantasy talks about the stories that we tell ourselves to explain the world and the societies that we build," she explains. "So it is really a literature where you get to look at different communities and how they function, and what their belief systems mean. All the fairies and dragons and stuff ultimately come out to some kind of belief system."

You won't find any dragons in Hopkinson's work. Instead, you'll discover a world where social analysis mingles with concepts of fractal math, ancestral rituals, time travel and evolution. One of the common elements of Hopkinson's work is the seamless weaving of science and spirituality.

"Well, it was a dead surprise to me to find out that [science and spirituality are] supposed to be separated from each other. I was an adult before I was hitting that argument, and by then I'd already published my first novel that had both," she says.

> The thing about science fiction as a literature is that it doesn't come out of our communities

"The world is a miraculous place and some of the ways it works we can figure out, and some of them we haven't figured out yet, and there's stuff out there that's so much bigger than us. I can see that, and I can see that I don't have the first idea of how that came to be."

A popular idea in the sci-fi community is that in the future, cross-racial interbreeding will make racism obsolete, but Hopkinson disagrees.

"We change our world. We create rituals, we create religions, we create technology, we create ways of dressing that help us identify with specific communities. We create music, literature, language, ways of speaking, and we're not going to stop doing that in a hurry. Even if the ways we use now to separate into communities disappear, we'll find others. Race is not really about the colour of your skin."

The complex issue of race is one with which Hopkinson sees a web of intense complexity.

"The thing with the definitions and the boxes is that they absolutely have a use. Having a sense of identity of who you are, and what your communities are, is something that absolutely human beings need to do," she argues.

"On the other hand, there's this tension between having your own identities, and having people trying to lock you into them and essentialize what they think you are. I think, as human beings, we really need to learn how to keep two or more contradictory ideas in our head at once and have them both be true."

Over the next year, Hopkinson will be busy working on her next two novels, both set in Toronto. The talented writer says that freedom and the expression to write beyond boundaries are crucial for other writers who would like to follow in her path.

"For some, social stricture weighs very hard. It really does constrict what they feel they can do. If, by being able to read my words in a book, they can see another way to be — at least in their heads if not reality — then I think I'm helping." ■

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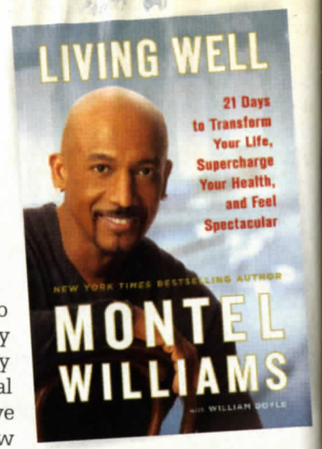
The best revenge

In *Living Well*, author and TV host Montel Williams reveals secrets to a healthier lifestyle BY: Jamaal Crawford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MONTEL WILLIAMS
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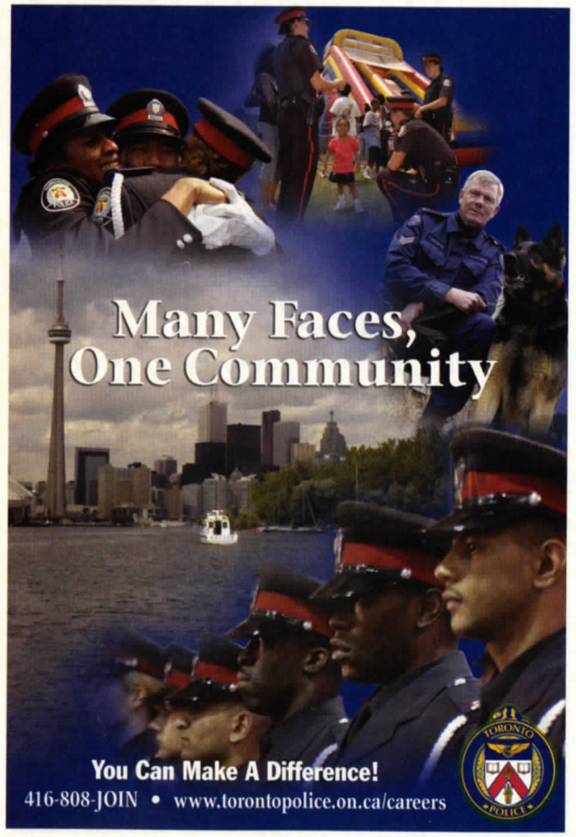
FOR THE PAST 17 years, talk show host Montel Williams has worked to build his identity from interviewer to media mogul and television icon. In early 1999, Williams was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a chronic disease that affects the central nervous system. Unwilling to submit to the limitations of his diagnosis, Williams has developed a health and wellness regime that has allowed him to continue with his hectic lifestyle. With *Living Well,* Williams reveals the "life secrets" that he believes will add strength, vitality and endurance to any lifestyle.

Sway: You were diagnosed with MS in 1999. How has your perspective on the illness changed from that time?
Montel Williams: When we hear the word "illness," we immediately think somebody's frail and weak. Truthfully, I may be ill, but I'm for damn sure not weak. The difference is I know I have MS, no ifs, ands or buts about this disease, but I'm never going to allow it to have me.

S: What does "living well" mean?
MW: Being able to get up and meet the challenges of every day. No matter whether they be emotional, whether they be up, down or in between, to meet the challenges every day head on, have the energy to do it, have the emotional strength to do it and have the wherewithal to know that after I've succeeded, I can now rest and enjoy what I've accomplished.

S: In your book, you mention that you are not a fan of "diets" or the "D" word. Why?
MW: No, I don't like the word "diet." I'd rather call it an eating regimen because diet represents these little plans that have a beginning and end date. If you take a look at the word "diet" on the Internet, you'll get about a million entries, because there's about a million and a half diets, and if any of them worked, there would only be one. So, diets don't work. I'm talking about a lifestyle change. This is not something you can do for the next month and then sit back and rest on your laurels; this is something you need to do for your life. This is called fitness for life — and what it does is transform your life. ■



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The sky's the limit

Natasha Eloi lands the job of a lifetime with SpaceTV BY: Kristine Maitland

SHE'S THE FACE that Trekkers, *Star Wars* fiends and *Battlestar Galactica* aficionados have come to know and love. Canadian Natasha Eloi has carved out her niche as Toronto's resident sci-fi queen — but it hasn't been an easy ascent into the heavens. *Sway* spoke with the cosmic girl while on location in Toronto.

Sway: Let's start at the beginning — you went to Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute. Didn't Mike Myers go there?
Eloi: My teacher, Howard Gross, would let new students who entered the radio and television program know this was the school that Mike Myers got his start in. And there are other [alumni] before him: Dominic Sciullo, the original videographer for CityTV — he was an instrumental mentor for me.

S: Did you become a TV intern during that high-school period?
E: Yes. In your last semester you are asked where you want to go and you are given three options. Given my short blonde hair, leather jacket and 18-hole steel toe boots was not the most conservative appearance, I chose CityTV. The school gave me the telephone number, and I had to do the legwork and I got in.

S: I find it funny that in order to get in front of the camera you had to hold it.
E: I never wanted to be in front of the camera, originally.

S: No?
E: No, that wasn't in the game plan. I wanted to be a cameraperson. I took different roots from my internships to landing on the LiveEye, being one of the first women on it. I just did everything I had to from pulling cable to dragging equipment. I wanted the truck and I wanted the camera, but it didn't happen that way. I ended up getting the camera, but it was attached to the LiveEye truck; so I was allowed to shoot, but it was always live. I never got the camera until I came to SpaceTelevision and to get the camera I had to be in front of the camera too.

S: So when did you come to Space?
E: In January 2000. When I was first hired for Space, it was to be the SpaceNews videographer. My background is technical. Truth be known, I was not good at science in school, but I am not one to let obstacles interfere or hinder me so I put the demo together. When I got the job, I had to ask myself if I wanted it as I was in my comfort zone doing news. It was literally my university, the University of Moses [Znaimer], but you've got to leave the nest and prove that you can do what you have been trained to do.

S: Pam Grier is one of your role models. Like you, she initially did not intend to be in front of the camera.
E: Really! When I meet new up-and-coming young women who are coming into this industry, I tell them to learn how television is made. Being in front of that camera is the cherry on top of the cake. Now, myself as a videographer, I have done well — I understand the full circle of how that works. ■

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The new face of Juliet

Nikki M. James takes on a classic

BY: Pamella Bailey

AT 26, NEW YORK'S Nikki M. James faces one of her most challenging roles as a star-crossed lover in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, opening at this year's Stratford Festival. With the company's prestigious reputation both at home and south of the border, and her first time performing in a play by the Bard, James admits the task is a daunting one. But not to worry, this performer is up for any challenge.

A graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, James has shown an affinity with the stage since the age of five, when she belted out Whitney Houston's "Greatest Love of All" at her kindergarten graduation. Growing up in New Jersey, just minutes from Manhattan's plethora of Broadway shows, James fell in love with musical theatre and spent her teens performing in talent shows and community theatre.

While her career has included television roles on *Law and Order* and *Third Watch*, James is most known for her work onstage. Her most exciting role to date was a funked up, retelling of *The Wiz* at La Jolla Playhouse, where she played the coveted role of Dorothy, winning the San Diego Theater Critics Circle award for Outstanding Lead Performance in a Musical. *The Wiz* was directed by Des McAnuff, one of the current artistic directors of the Stratford Festival. His encouragement led James to audition for the role of Juliet.

"As an actor, you find directors who you really click with and can get great performances out of you and that you want to work for again," says James. "He asked me to audition, but I still worked my butt off to get the job."

Under McAnuff's direction, James is finding the rhythm of Shakespeare, using her musical background as a basis.

"Language is poetry. It has a rhythm that you have to honour… If you think of the text as rhythm, you understand when you can and cannot fall off the beat, and how you need to drive through the verse to get to the bridge. You need to take it piece by piece to build up to the different layers, rather than being paralyzed at the idea of doing Shakespeare." ■

Previews begin May 7, opens May 26 at the Stratford Festival. For more information, visit stratfordfestival.ca. Or call the box office at 1-800-567-1600.

Acting out

Crosscurrents festival promotes innovative works for artists of colour

BY: Pamella Bailey

THE CROSSCURRENTS FESTIVAL is back for a seventh year to promote innovative works from established and emerging artists of colour, including African Canadians, Asian, South Asian and Middle Eastern playwrights.

"This is the only festival that empowers the culturally diverse theatre community to have their stories not only told but developed," says Nina Lee Aquino, the festival's artistic producer. "We give artists a chance to develop their work, find voices and put it on stage."

The 10-day festival features playwrights from across Canada, including Toronto's Andrew Moodie, who tackles racial profiling with his play *Toronto the Good,* and Anita Majumdar, a South Asian playwright whose one-woman show, *Fish Eyes,* played to sold out performances in Toronto. She is set to stage her new play, *The Misfit*.

Many of the artists in the festival also participate in Undercurrents, a mentorship program for young, emerging artists of colour with an interest in theatre. Tiffany Martin, a recent graduate from the theatre performance program at Humber College, played Jill in George F. Walker's *Tough!*. For her, this three-month program provides an outlet to explore her art and connect with professional artists.

Supporting emerging artists of colour like Martin is a driving force for Aquino, who comes from an Asian culture "defined by parents who want to see their kids grow up as engineers or doctors." She understands the courage it takes to be a non-white artist.

"It's different in every community — aboriginal, African Canadian — we all have our struggles. To have the courage to be an artist is a hard thing for us. I will do everything I can to support that." ■

Crosscurrents runs from May 2-11 at Factory Theatre. For more information, visit factorytheatre.ca, or call 416-504-9971.

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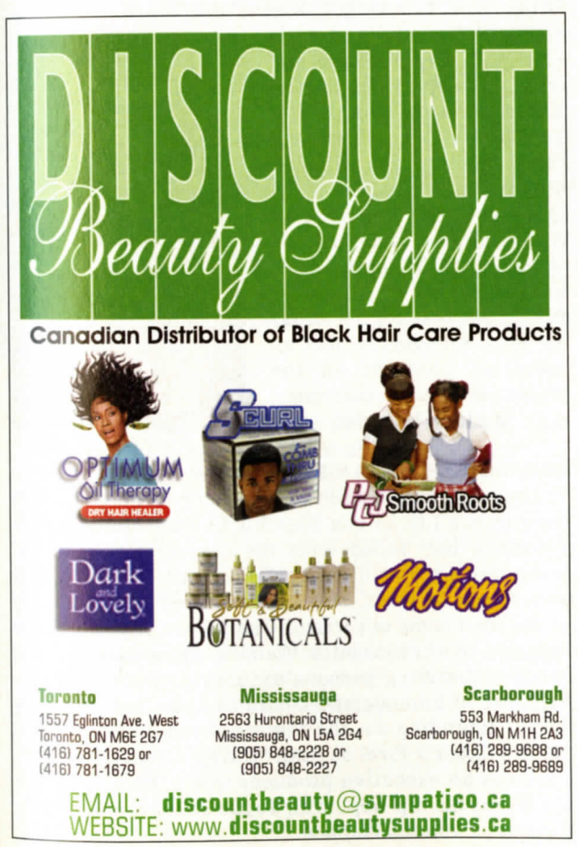
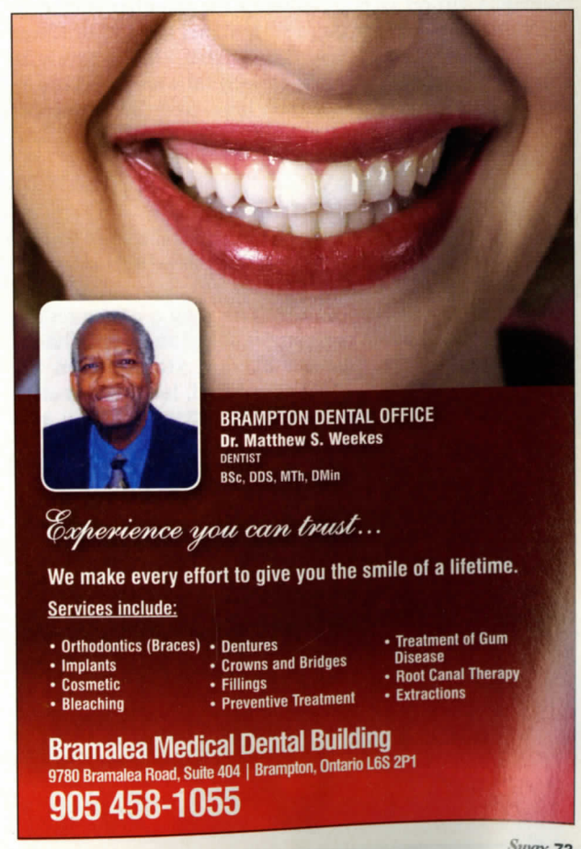
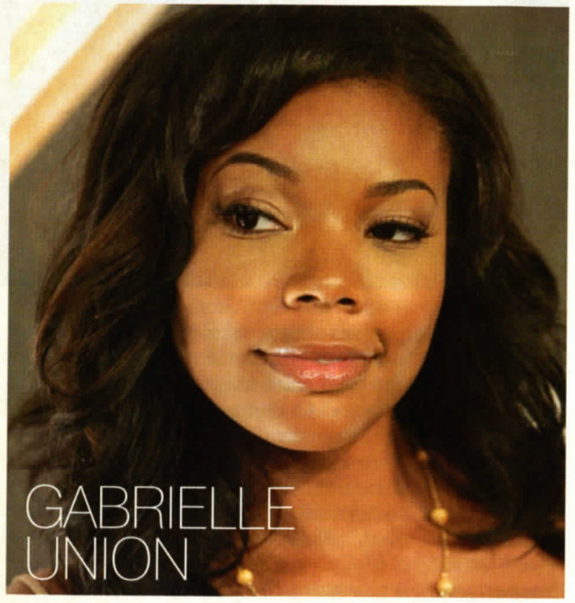




Hollywood HYPE

The buzz on the backlots

BY: Jon Sarpong

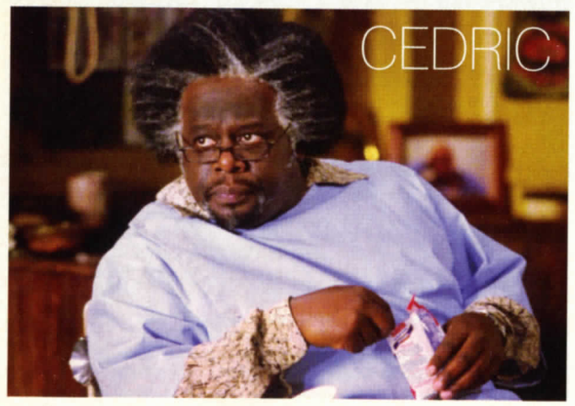


GABRIELLE UNION JUMPS INTO 'CADILLAC'

Gabrielle Union is the newest cast member added to *Cadillac Records*, an indie film about the life of Chess Records founder Leonard Chess with Adrien Brody in the starring role. The period piece follows the rise and fall of the famed label, which launched the careers of such R&B greats as Muddy Waters, Etta James and Chuck Berry.

CEDRIC THE ENTERTAINER TO DIRECT

For the first time in his career, Cedric the Entertainer is behind the camera. The actor is the director, co-executive producer and star of the upcoming indie flick, *Chicago Pulaski Jones*. The movie centres on a young championship dancer, Pulaski Jones, who heads to the big city for his shot at superstardom. On the day he arrives, his uncle is murdered, leaving Jones to avenge his uncle's death vigilante style. The film also stars Tommy Davidson, Gary Sturgis and the film's co-writer and co-producer, Kel Mitchell.



WILL SMITH PHARAOH PROJECT

The rumour mill is buzzing with word that Will Smith's Overbrook Entertainment production company is interested in producing Carl Franklin's next film, *The Last Pharaoh*. The story follows Taharqa, the king of Egypt (from 690 BC to 664 BC) and a member of the Nubian or 25th dynasty of Egypt. He was the son of Piye, the Nubian king of Napata, who had first conquered Egypt. The story follows the epic war between the Ethiopians and Assyrians for the throne of Amun-Ra.

BEYONCE, ELBA MARRIED IN NEW THRILLER

Beyonce Knowles and Idris Elba will play husband and wife in the upcoming motion picture *Obsessed*, a thriller for Screen Gems that will begin shooting this summer. Elba will play an asset manager who has a knockout wife (Knowles) and thriving career until a temp office worker played by Ali Larter (NBC's *Heroes*) begins stalking him. Knowles is also an executive producer on the project with her father/manager, Mathew Knowles.

AMAL WOOLARD GETS HIS B.I.G. BREAK

The months-long search for an actor to play the late Notorious B.I.G. in Fox Searchlight's upcoming biopic *Notorious* has ended with the casting of Brooklyn-based rapper Jamal "Gravy" Woolard. "Finding BIG was a task in itself, and I'm honoured that so many young men came out to audition for the role," said the rapper's mother, Voletta Wallace. "However, it was Jamal's charming personality, warm spirit, wonderful sense of humour and beautiful smile that won my heart." Rounding out the *Notorious* cast is Derek Luke (2006's *Catch a Fire*) as Sean "Diddy" Combs, who off-screen is an executive producer on the film; Anthony Mackie as his hip-hop rival, Tupac Shakur; and Angela Bassett as Voletta Wallace.

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Player hater

Amanda Brugel dishes about success, failure and the games people play to become famous BY: Jon Sarpong

CANADIAN ACTRESS AMANDA BRUGEL isn't interested in being famous. But the thoughtful thespian is certainly conscious of the difference between fame and the craft that she considers her personal passion.

"I used to look at magazines and think 'this is what I want,'" says Brugel, sipping herbal tea in a coffee shop. "But magazines have nothing to do with acting or theatre, or why I love this profession. If you are basing your future in what you see in magazines or the buzz being created about you by others, you are not based in reality."

For Brugel, the importance of having a firm understanding of identity has been developed through a lifetime of self-discovery. Adopted at a very early age, she was made aware of both her ethnic and family identities.

"Growing up, I was never allowed to discount any facet of my heritage or lineage," says Brugel. "It's important for me to treat every aspect of my background equally. My father is African American, but I've never met him. I was adopted by the man I speak of as my father, who is half Jewish and half Indian; my mother was born in England and made her way to Canada. So there is this eclectic mix of cultures and histories."

Unlike many in the television and film industry, Brugel's road to 'the biz' was initially relatively easy. Coaxed by a drama teacher to try out for the school play, Brugel landed the lead role playing Anne in *Anne of Green Gables*. With the offer of a full scholarship, she was soon at York University, flexing her theatrical muscles with other young visionaries. But soon after graduation, Brugel quickly realized that the multicultural, insulated world of campus theatre bore little resemblance to the global stage.

"I came out of theatre school with the idea that I was going to be a big star," she says. "In school, they build you up, and because I'd been in an environment where they would cast blindly, I thought that was how the world operated. Only after leaving did I realize I wouldn't be cast for roles like Ophelia — I was ignorant of the truth about the industry."

Two quick acting jobs (including the 10th installment of the thriller film series *Friday the 13th*) seemed to be precursors to a promising career. But instead of casting calls and job offers, Brugel found herself at the beginning of what would prove to be an acting drought. Questioning herself, her craft and her willingness to go on, Brugel found herself at a crossroad.

"After my first two jobs, for the next five years, there was almost nothing," says Brugel. "During that time it was difficult, especially when it came to auditioning. Agents would see my colour and not understand why I spoke a certain way. In a lot of cases, it would be from casting directors and often African-American female casting directors. There was this thinking that a girl who grew up half-white, half-Jewish, all over Canada couldn't relate to certain 'black' roles or to the plight of the ghetto."

Faced with the prospect of an industry that seemed to have no specific need for her talents, Brugel found herself questioning whether or not to leave showbiz. One night while debating her career with her now-fiancé, she found herself faced with a stark realization.

"My fiancé looked at me and said, 'Well, you say that you are going to leave the business, but when have you ever really been a part of the business?' Until that point, I think it was like I was playing dressup. I loved telling people that I was an actor, but without really putting in the work. So I came up with a business plan and started taking my auditions more seriously. I began to market myself and got my website going; I changed the way I looked at the business side of things."

Brugel's new approach has had tremendous results. Her new energy has grabbed the attention of casting agents thrilled by the unique flavour she brings to the screen. Since her transformation, she's landed plum gigs including a recurring role on CBC TV's series *MVP: The Secret Lives of Hockey Wives* [which has since been cancelled]. The career shift that she is now experiencing is a welcomed trend, and Brugel is intent on using her newfound opportunities to secure a future in the industry which she loves.

"I know that I have a limited time in which to make my mark." And with her new found drive, we know she will.

SWAY was there

Aroni Awards

A Night of Inspiration, the Aroni Awards Gala was created in memory of Aron Haile (whose life was tragically cut short by a car accident) by his brother Mesfun Haile to help youth realize their dreams and celebrate their achievements.

1. Mother Carol Allen recieved an Inspire Award on behalf of her son Keegan Allen who was the innocent victim of gun violence in 2007.

2. Andrea Henrey, former member of *Sugar Jones*, belts out her newest single.

3. *Canadian Idol* judge Farley Flex (left) and actress Elle Downs (right) hosted the event.

4. *Sway* publisher Cheryl Phillips took the mic to hand out an award to a young pioneer.

5. Members from *Manifesto* pose after accepting an award.

6. Cabral Richards, better known as Cabbie from *The Score*, shares some laughs with the audience after dropping one of the awards.

Photos by:
Bruce from Fusion Fotography

Real Frequency Party

Hip-hop artist Kardinal Offishal (left), alongside his DJ (right), rocked the The Real Frequency Anniversary Party at the Sound Academy in Toronto.

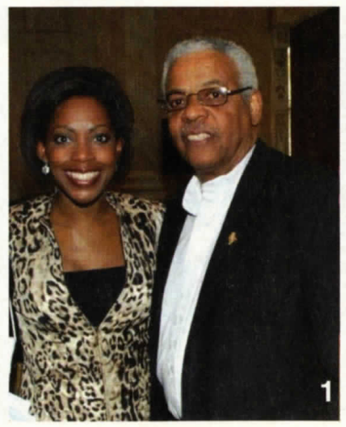
Photos by:
Melissa Bessey

Second Chance Gala Dinner

The annual Second Chance dinner event brings together high ranking members of various police departments, support staff, provincial and federal ministers for a night of dining and music.

1. *CTV's* Andria Case (middle) with former MP Alvin Curling (right).
2. Grammy nominated poet, author, activist and English professor from Virginia Tech Nikki Giovanni spoke movingly at the event.

Photos by:
Elsa Sewell



ReelWorld Film Festival

Actors, directors, producers and film buffs met up at the VIP ReelWorld opening party event to celebrate diversity in Canadian film.

1. Tonya Lee Williams (right), founder of the festival and Emmy-winning soap actor, poses with long-time friend Arlene Duncan (left) from *Little Mosque on the Prarie*.

2. Actor Richard Leacock takes in the festivities.

3. Host Arisa Cox from *E! News* strikes a pose.

4. Movie buffs Michelle Medford and Johanna Donalds take in the star power.

Photos by: Simona Siad

L'Oreal Fashion Week, Spring 2008

Cool 1970s white trouser suits, futuristic metallic swimsuits and light candy-hued silk jersey dresses – that's just a sampling of the chic après-five dressing produced by Kendra Francis, head designer of Franke (iamfranke.com). For Rea McNamara's exclusive one-on-one with designer Kendra Francis, visit swaymag.ca.

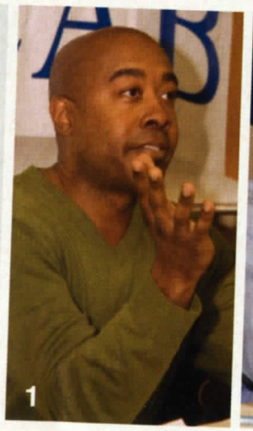
1. Kendra Francis 2. A runway model strikes a pose. 3.Models pose with Francis (in pink) after her spring show.
Photos by: Phoebe Lo

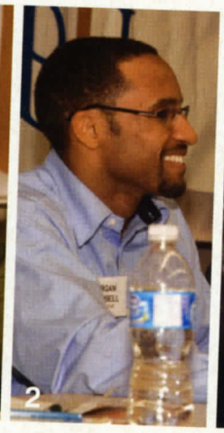
Breaking Into The Media Biz

The Canadian Association of Black Journalists (CABJ) give advice to young journalists at their mentoring event.

1. Global TV's Nathan Downer.
2. Morgan Campbell, *Toronto Star* sports reporter.
3. Author and journalist Spider Jones talks to a group of aspiring journalists.

Photos by: Cyril Cromwell Simmonds of TOportfolio





GET OUT!

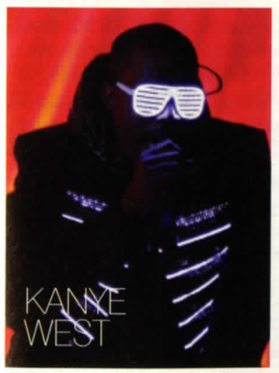
PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SEE

ERYKAH BADU
Monday May 5
Honey voiced soul singer Erykah Badu visits Toronto in support of her latest release *New Amerykah*, Part 1. Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St. masseyhall.com

TRINIDAD VS JAMAICA COMEDY NIGHT
Sunday May 11
Popular local and international Caribbean-focused stand-up comics face of for national rights in this hilarious showcase of talent and humour. 2 pm. $45. Panasonic Theatre, 651 Yonge St.

LUCIANO, QUEEN IFRICA, AND ETANA
Sunday May 11
The 'King of Lover's Rock' returns to Toronto for a one-night showcase, featuring rock, roots and reggae. 8 pm. $40. Sound Academy, 11 Polson St. ticketmaster.ca

KANYE WEST'S GLOW IN THE DARK TOUR
Wednesday May 21
Super producer, fashion icon and Grammy-winner Kanye West fronts an all-star lineup as he returns to Toronto with his first headlining tour. 7 pm. $39.50-$84.50. Molson Amphitheatre, 909 Lakeshore Blvd. W.



DIANA ROSS
Friday May 30 & Saturday May 31
The original diva descends on Toronto for two star-studded shows highlighting Motown hits and pop music classics. 9 pm. $51.75 - $74.75. Casino Rama, R.R. #6 Rama Rd., Orillia.

ALICIA KEYS AS I AM TOUR
Friday June 6
Multi-platinum award-winning artist and actress Alicia Keys visits Toronto in support of her Billboard topping release *As I Am*. Time and ticket information TBA.

THE CARIBANA FESTIVAL PRESENTED BY SCOTIA BANK
Friday June 6 – Sunday August 8
North America's biggest jump-up is back for another year and the festival has never been longer or better than now. This year's celebrations feature headline concert, midnight pan alive, and much more. Ticketed and free events. Various times and locations. For more info on the months-long festivities, visit caribanatoronto.com.

SINBAD
Friday June 13 & Saturday June 14
Comedic icon, actor and activist Sinbad brings his unique brand of flavour back to his favourite Canadian locale. 9 pm. $31.50-$42. Niagara Fallsview Casino, 6733 Fallsview Blvd, Niagara.

WE R TENORS
Sunday June 15
Tenors Cook, Dixon & Young have performed as a trio in major concert halls and opera houses around the world, delighting fans and critics alike with their vocal artistry and diversity. 7:30 pm. $65-$185. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. roythomson.com.

TD CANADA TRUST TORONTO JAZZ FESTIVAL
Friday June 20 – Sunday June 29
Back for its 21st year, the TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival plans to celebrate in a big way by featuring artists such as Al Green and Roy Hargrove. Various ticket prices and locations. tojazz.com.

PRIDE WEEK TORONTO: UNIFIED
Friday June 20 – Sunday June 29
Once again, Pride takes over Yonge Street and many other downtown locales with celebrations, featuring drag, burlesque and other performances. Various venues, free and ticketed events. pridetoronto.com.

AFROFEST
Saturday July 5 – Sunday July 6
This two-day festival showcases the beauty and diversity of African cultures through music, dance, food and crafts. Free. Queen's Park Cres., University Ave. and Wellesley Ave. musicafrica.org.

ALICIA KEYS

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE WORLD ROUTES
This summer Harbourfront Centre presents top Canadian and international artists in music, dance, theatre, visual arts and film at each World Routes weekend from June 26 to September 1. All festivals are free and suitable for all ages.

For more information on all Harbourfront events, call 416-973-4000 or visit harbourfrontcentre.com.

BARBADOS CHARITY BALL

Forty one years after the independence of Barbados, the fifth annual Barbados Charity Ball celebrates the enduring friendship between Barbados and Canada on May 31 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

The government and people of Barbados place an overwhelming emphasis on education and health, and to this end the Barbados Charity Ball is about strengthening commercial, educational and cultural ties between Barbados and Canada.

Hosted by emcee Brian Smith and Alison Sealey, with performing celebrities including internationally acclaimed saxophonist Arturo Tappin, singer John King, live music from Prince Cave and the Allstars, auctions and Barbadian cuisine will be washed down with rum punch amid a "magical journey underwater" theme.

Peggy Murray, marketing chair of the Barbados Charity Ball, explains the importance of the charity, which has raised more than $100,000 in funds to provide scholarships to educational institutions and programs/support for youth with HIV/AIDS.

"The Barbados Charity is about strengthening commercial and cultural ties between Canada and Barbados," Murray says.

Tickets are $200 each. For more information, call 905-472-1188 or 416-614-3143.

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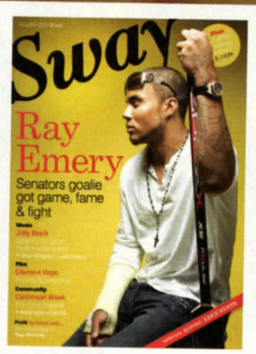

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Guidance & growth

Dear Xania:
I'm a 29-year-old woman and one of my best friends is getting married this year. He's African American and she's East Indian. Both families are embracing the union – which is great. They've been engaged for less than a year and appear to be happy. However, I know him. He's not a one-woman type of guy. He's always been the guy who has broken hearts, played the field and always had girls falling all over him. We've always been the best of friends since high school and we've never crossed that "friendship" line, nor do I ever want to. I just don't want to see him make a decision that he'll regret in the years to come. As a friend who cares about him, do I shed light on a potential mistake or let him find his way?

Signed, On The Sideline

Dear On the Sideline:
I can appreciate you looking out for your boy, but it's his decision to get married — whether he regrets it or not. You may know him to hang out and crack jokes with but maybe he has realized his family aspirations. He has probably reached a crossroad in his life where he is faced with deciding between single life and starting a family. His fiancé is his future and this is something you need to accept. At some point in our playboy/playgirl lives, most of us do meet the one person who inspires us to be a better person and settle down. He's branching out and taking a risk on love. Unless he's given you solid reasons that lead you to believe he's going to cheat on his bride-to-be, give him the benefit of the doubt. Our past doesn't define us; our past has molded us into who we are today. The good, the bad and the ugly have taught us right from wrong. So, although your friend may have never been a one-woman type of guy, chances are he's met his challenge, someone who he's ready to commit to. Your job as a caring friend is to support him and guide him when he's in doubt. Assure him you're not going anywhere and he can count on you in the years to come. He's going to need you more than ever! I think he's found his way, and you might be feeling nervous that your best friend isn't going to be around as much. Don't resist the marriage. If you want to keep him around, you're going to have to befriend her. Be happy for both of them and be genuine in your feeling. Otherwise, he'll be able to sense your hesitation and resent you.

Dear Xania:
My daughter is aesthetically and mentally different from her schoolmates. We are very close due to the fact that I've been a single mother for all her 12 years of life. She is different looking, yet pretty, a straight-A student and well travelled. We live in an environment where uniqueness is not cultivated nor tolerated. This difference is causing her social problems. Do I compromise our values so that she is able to fit in?

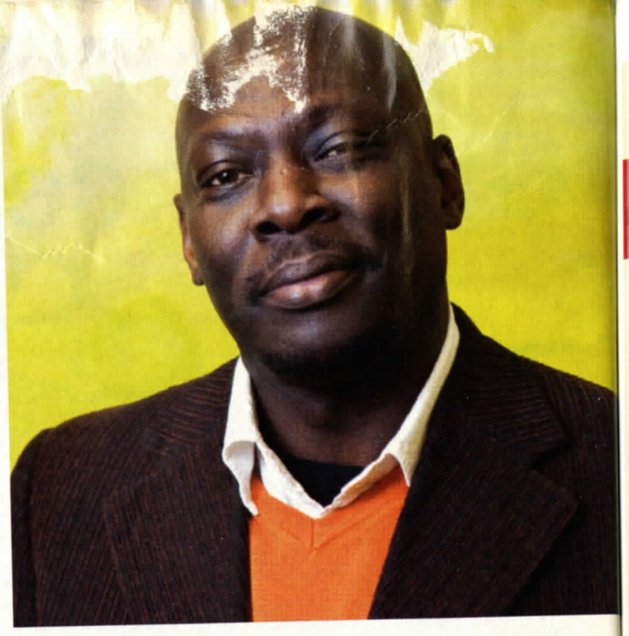
Signed, The Shape Shifter

Dear Shape Shifter:
As a mother, do you honestly think teaching your daughter to compromise her values so she can fit in is a positive trait? You have to think about the long-term effects. Encourage your daughter to be a leader, not a follower. Fitting in is not defined by conformity to one's environment. Fitting in can take on different methods such as showing others alternative ways to think and opening minds, daring them to grow outside their own box and garnering acceptance and respect through teaching without being egotistical. Your daughter seems to have great qualities — straight As, well travelled and beautiful. Those characteristics are a great foundation for her to build on and because you've been her sole role model, she's obviously going to depend on you in very tough times. I suggest you expose her to a variety of women from different cultures who have struggled to make a difference. For example, Rosa Parks, Benazir Bhutto, Anne Frank, et al. Explain the suffering, afflictions and challenges these women endured for movements that have shaped and altered historical development. Encourage her to read about women who have made history because they dared to be different or refused to conform. She'll be able to relate and perhaps take that knowledge and apply it to the social problems she experiences with her schoolmates. As she follows the path of a leader at school, she'll develop the skills and ability to change ignorant behaviour. It's not going to be easy and she will constantly be challenged. Once she starts to break down the wall in her own way, she'll cultivate courage that will be with her forever. Never compromise your values.

OH, ONE MORE THING

Does the diaspora open the door to African identity?

BY: Ato Quayson



THE STUDY OF Africa within African studies and that of African diaspora studies have traditionally been taken to be distinctive fields. As a rule, when people speak of the African diaspora, they refer predominantly to the former slave diasporas in North America, Brazil and the Caribbean. In this view, the African diaspora is one of the classic diasporas and is comparable to that of the Jewish, the Greek and the Armenian traditions.

Studies of diaspora within Africa have sometimes taken account of the many confluences and trajectories of non-African peoples who, for various reasons, have found themselves on the continent, and also of Africans who have found themselves elsewhere. In the first category, we might include the considerable South Asian diaspora in East Africa, the Lebanese diaspora of West Africa and the Italian diaspora of South Africa, among others.

South Indians, mainly from India, were first brought to East Africa as indentured labour from about the 1890s. When the policy was extended by the British to East Africa from the West Indies, it was mainly to provide non-African labour for building the East African railway.

The Indians in East Africa were predominantly skilled, being mainly technicians, blacksmiths, woodworkers, and so on. After the termination of the indentured labour policy in the 1920s, some of them decided to remain in the region. Being mostly male, they were encouraged to marry and bring their wives over from India.

After the independence of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, the Indians had not only become a central part of the civil service administration but also considered themselves African. Significantly, by the 1960s, the myth of return, long taken as a defining feature of diasporas, had been progressively abandoned by the East-African Indians. From largely rural areas in India, they were now heavily urbanized and used to negotiating with urban institutions.

The question remains: are these East-African Indians 'Africans' or 'Indians'?

Crucial in answering this question is the character of marriage patterns among this community. They tended to practise caste endogamy, and so, despite the long sojourn in Africa, they retained symbols of Indian forms of social reproduction. However, when asked where they come from, they routinely respond that they come from Africa and not India.

I was embarrassed once at a grocery shop run by an Indian family, while in Cambridge, England. Once I fell to chatting with the older Indian man, I blissfully assumed that he was from India. We shared mutual tales about how cold and different the United Kingdom was from back "home." We both missed the social warmth of our respective homelands. I then asked him: "So do you often go back to India to visit?" His answer, clearly with some measure of bafflement: "No, I have never been there before." Me, with increasing confusion: "Why not?" Him: 'I come from Kenya!" Me: "Oh!" That taught me a lesson I am not likely to forget in a hurry.

The case of the Indians of East Africa provides fascinating entry points for discussing the nature of the African (who qualifies to be called African and how did they get to be African) as well as wider debates about categories in diaspora studies in general (different types of diasporization and their intersections and overlaps over time).

Furthermore, the multilateral focus of diaspora studies provides a supple way of understanding processes that seem to take place in the exclusively "African" population. Are there lessons to be drawn from diaspora studies for understanding the large movements of Nigerians and Ghanaians between their two countries over the past 40 years? How about the Hutu refugees who have been in Tanzania since the 1970s? And what of the increasing numbers of Africans from all parts of the country coming to seek their welfare in post-apartheid South Africa?

And what do we say about the new Africans in Canada, as opposed to the descendants of the old African diasporas from the 16th century onwards? And the waves of Caribbean migration into the country since the 1950s? What constitutes black Canada, given all these roots and routes, and are we able to form communal alliances to provide conduits for further understanding each other and for following the shared goals of self-fashioning and self-fulfillment for ourselves and for our children and for their children after them?

What do the East African Indians, many of whom have found themselves in Canada, have to teach us about the maintenance and expansion of distinctive identities?

Even though we cannot dismiss the nation as a unit of analysis of identity, it is evident that posing the question of identity in Canada through a diasporic, as opposed to a nationalist, lens throws up quite a range of issues and ideas. Yet it is time to look at the matter really seriously and from as many directions as possible.

And the sooner, the better.

As the Gikuyu of Kenya put it: "He who waits to see the whole animal ends up spearing the tail." ■

Ato Quayson is a professor of English and director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto.

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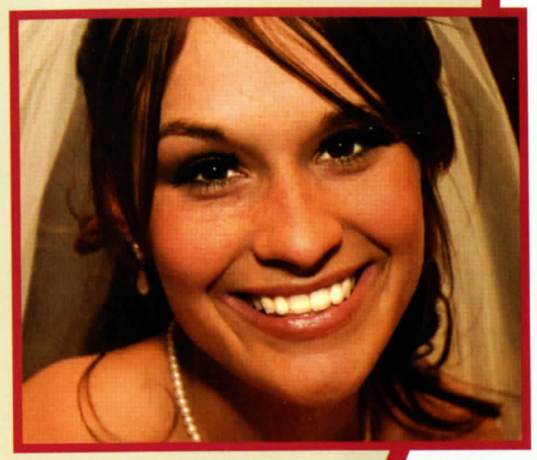

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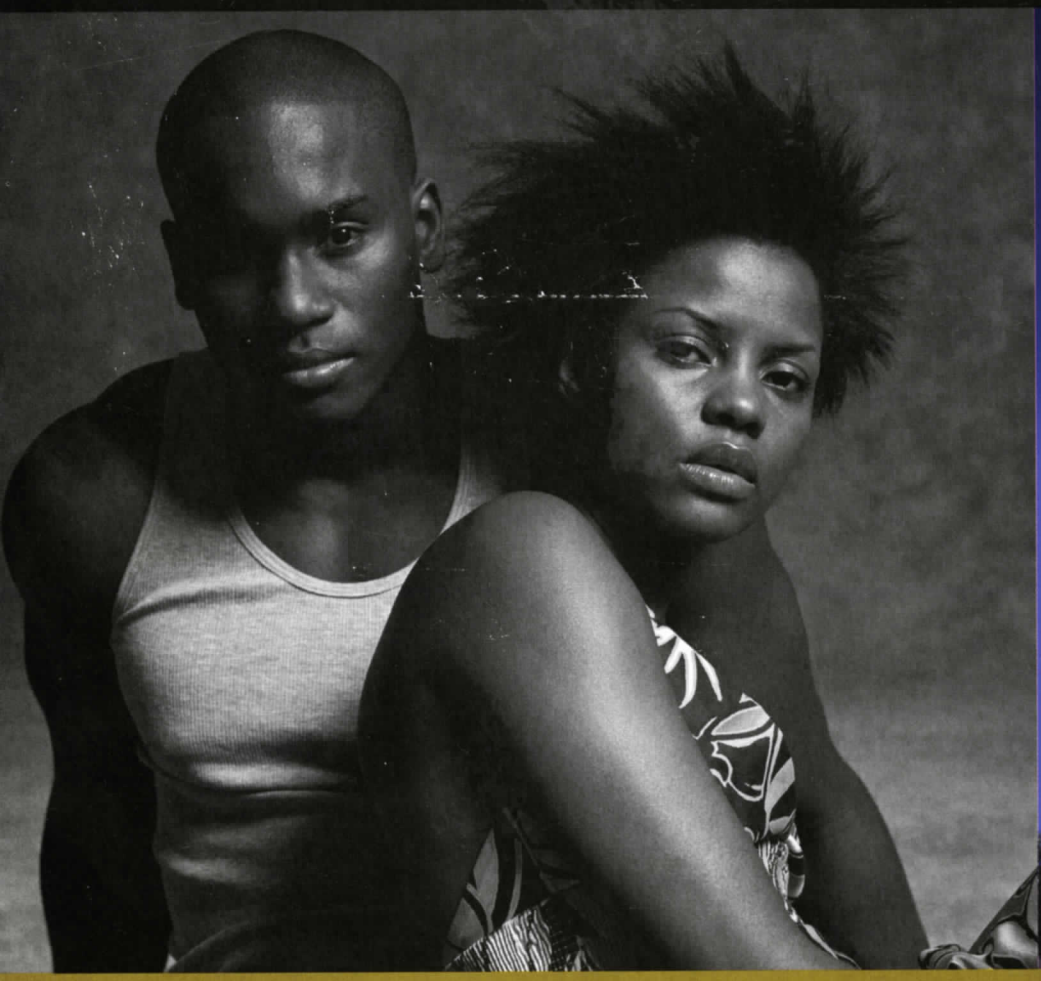

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